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SIDE LIGHTS ON  
THE SIBERIAN  
CAMPAIGN

J. MACKINTOSH BELL



8/14/12

with best wishes from

J. Macintosh Bell

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# SIDE LIGHTS ON THE SIBERIAN CAMPAIGN

By

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## PREFACE

In travelling across the Trans-Siberian Railway in the days before the war, when splendidly equipped trains ran from Petrograd or Moscow to Vladivostok, the imaginative foreigner thrilled with the glory and the magnitude and the limitless possibilities of the vast domain of the czars. He saw hundreds of miles of wonderfully rich agricultural lands in Europe dotted with numerous towns and villages, and beyond the Urals the great plains of Siberia, vaster even than those of Canada; the immense forests, as yet unbroken; the far-flung mineral lands with every conceivable element for the use of man. Enough, one would think, to rouse the patriotic enthusiasm of those who dwelt in so vast a heritage. But if, in his admiration, he were to expect an echo of his feelings from his Russian fellow-travellers he was generally doomed to disappointment. The Russian, in fact, was too often devoid of that pride of country so characteristic of peoples who control great areas of the earth. Most of the relatively huge army of civil, military, naval and ecclesiastical officials had a certain limited loyalty to the Czar, but to many of them it mattered not whether their country developed or prospered so long as they were able by fair means or sinister to make the wherewithal by which they were able to pursue the even tenor of their sordid existences. The merchants and tradespeople were more interested in the success of their several endeavors than in the expansion of an empire so marvellously endowed in the wealth of its resources. The peasants, who formed the vast majority of the population, scarcely seeing beyond the limits of their villages,

knew as little of the extent and riches of the Empire as they did of those of the other side of the earth.

Realizing this lack of concrete patriotism in her inhabitants, it is, in fact, difficult to understand how it was that the pioneers of Russia pushed across the Urals and, greatly outnumbered by the indigenous inhabitants, pursued their advance to the frontiers of India, into China, and even beyond the Pacific into Alaska.

The impetus for the stupendous zeal for exploration which actuated such splendid pioneers as General Muravieff Amurski, or Admiral Nebelskoi, in their efforts to win the Far East seems to have sprung as much from a love of adventure or a deep attachment to the head of the state as from any great desire to increase the territory over which the Russian race should hold sway. There was, however, a more definite purpose in the minds of the few who controlled affairs in Petrograd. They looked forward to a great homogeneous non-disparate empire the cohorts of which, from their strongholds beyond the Urals, would in time spread over China, Persia, Afghanistan, and possibly India.

The inspiration for expansion was sporadic rather than continuous. It ebbed and flowed, now under a ruler like Peter the Great, or a politician like De Witte, shewing a sudden advancement, again exhibiting a long period when the confines of empire moved no farther forward or even when the frontiersmen who guarded the flag in far-flung corners were pushed back.

Even those at Petrograd who dreamed dreams and saw visions of a colossal empire, of a people speaking one language, knowing one culture and

owing one allegiance to Russian Church and Russian Czar from the Baltic to Alaska, from Mongolia and Turkestan to the Arctic, relegated the idea of its development to the future. Unlike the Americans, or even the British, they were actuated by no feverish enthusiasm to force progress. They felt the country, occupied by Russian advance guards, was theirs, and that sooner or later the opportunity would come to establish the ideals, which lay in the back of their minds, even to the farthest confines.

Perhaps no element did more constructive work in the early development of Siberia than the political exiles, many of whom were men of great strength of character in old Russia, who carried their energy and enthusiasm for effort into their enforced home beyond the Urals. As opposed to these, the convicts who toiled in the mines under close control or enjoyed a certain measure of freedom to roam within the limits of areas guarded by huge stretches of *steppe* or desert or *taiga* formed only the unwilling and, in fact, often unconscious instruments of progress. Until about fifty years ago these outcasts from Russia, together with their military guards, formed the only European settlers in the Siberian wilderness, but within recent decades a stream of colonists, steadily increasing until the outbreak of the Great War, crossed the Urals to find a new home in what had come to be known as a veritable land of promise.

Far removed from the keen disappointments of Petrograd during the first summer of the Revolution or from the memories of the disastrous Siberian campaign of later years, forgetting, for the moment, the freezing *bourannes* of the Sibe-

rian *steppes* or the grilling dust storms of the deserts of Turkestan, I recall Russia and Siberia in less trying times and under happier conditions. The memories of long journeys on horseback with picturesque Cossacks over wild mountain passes or flowery plains; the mirthful excitement of bartering with *eesvostchiks*, small tradesmen or peddlars amid the peculiar smells, the bizarre scenes, the patient heterogeneous crowds of old Moscow; the unfailing hospitality on a scale of lavishness unknown elsewhere of prince and peasant; the almost unfailing good humor of the officials of régimes which changed so frequently during my later visits—these and a thousand other remembrances come to me as I write and I long to be back once more; to smell again the curious scent of leather pervading the atmosphere of Russian life; to mix with the strangely unreasonable and barbarous, though generally courteous and kindly population; to let my eyes wander over the slopes of Asiatic mountains and to feel the afterglow of sunset on the southern deserts.

The pictures of Russian life, the stories of some experiences in a country so little understood, which I give in the following pages will, I hope, encourage a sympathy for Russia and her people in her present agony; a deeper recognition of the great part the country will yet fulfil in the world's history.

J.M.B.

“Old Burnside,”  
Almonte, Ontario,  
Canada.

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# SIDE LIGHTS ON THE SIBERIAN CAMPAIGN

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## CHAPTER I.

PETROGRAD IN JUNE AND JULY, 1917.

The crowd with which I travelled in the long journey from Aberdeen by way of Bergen, Christiania, Stockholm and Haparanda, through Finland to Petrograd, in June, 1917, was a motley one indeed. Its predominating element was intensely revolutionary—refugees of the approved type, unusual of costume and fired with enthusiasm for the long-anticipated event which had electrified the world. I remember more particularly a Jewish family of three—husband, wife and child—who represented the essence of the extreme red-flag view-point. She was the more vigorous partner—a little, black-eyed, black-haired, swarthy-skinned, dried-up wisp, who bore the mark of many sufferings on her face, with cruel memories burning into her very soul, and embittering still more a disposition which nature had intended to be hard and sour. One felt instinctively that her influence in that sea of conflicting ideas towards which we were bound would be sinister and harmful to the moderate view-point which Russian well-wishers hoped would make headway.

Her husband—dirty, long-haired and oily—was her mentor in violent expression. Their offspring,

a boy of ten, lacked every charm which one ordinarily associates with early youth. His face was that of an old man, peaked and pinched, and with a wicked expression like that of a hardened criminal. This unpleasant trio dominated. They thrust themselves into every group which formed on ship or in stops at railway stations, decrying the war and the Allies, especially England. No abuse was too violent for the country in which they had found refuge and liberty after an escape from the miseries of Russian prisoners a few years before.

Among our company were a number of Russian soldiers returning from France, on leave, so they said, with the object of encouraging an active re-participation of their country in the war. They soon fell under the spell of the black she-devil, as we came to know her, and before we had crossed the Russian frontier she had no more ardent disciples to spread her doctrines.

She was not without one strong counterfoil in the party, a Russian Red Cross nurse also returning from France, where, as she whispered, she had been engaged by loftily placed individuals in contra-espionage. Apparently she had had a brilliant military career and was not averse to detailing her exploits. But one forgave her this vanity. She was gay and attractive and lost no opportunity to combat with tremendous vigor and with some success the insidious propaganda of her rival. On all occasions the badinage was so abusive and the language so appalling that one wondered why they did not betake themselves to stronger measures. There was, however, one vigorous encounter, the climax of a particularly

heated effort. Hair flew, clothes were rent asunder, and our ally emerged victorious, displaying to the assembled spectators her much treasured Cross of St. George, won, as she said, for valor in the field, while her enemy retired ignominiously to adjust her torn garments.

The rumors with which we had been fed as to the fate which awaited us in Russia grew as we travelled slowly southward through Finland, and reached a peak on our arrival at Beliostrof—on the Russo-Finnish frontier. Here the greatest excitement reigned. Street fighting had broken out in Petrograd, and the gutters ran with blood, Kerensky had been killed and the Royal Family reinstated, the soldiers and sailors committee were in charge of the city and admission or egress was not allowed. These, and a thousand other similar stories—all equally without foundation—flung us into a turmoil. I, with other officers, was urged to don my uniform for protection. Again, we were begged to remain in civilians lest we should be the magnet to which the blood seekers would turn in their frenzy.

At the station there was scarcely a semblance of order. We all had to pass the control point, but this was apparently a formality inherited from a more stable government, rather than a necessary restriction. There was little food to be had, and we all went more or less hungry in the hours that elapsed between our arrival and departure. The she-devil became more furious than ever, but was forced to admit that in England she could have at least got something to eat. However, she countered this admission by urging us to wait till we were really in Russia

where there would be plenty for every one now that the reign of the aristocrats was past.

When the officials were ready, the train departed. There, apparently, had been no question at any time of our not leaving, and after an entirely uneventful journey we arrived at the Finland Station in Petrograd in the very early morning. The city was quiet and had been so for weeks. There was the usual trouble of sorting out luggage, the usual difficulty of bargaining with *eesvostchiks*—less numerous than of yore—the same old characteristic smell of leather, the same crowd of porters, larger perhaps than of old; in other words, the station, and the city too, as we drove through it to our hotel, looked much as it did on the occasion of my last visit three or four years before.

But it was not really so. Beneath an apparent calm, the people of the capital, and in fact the whole of the country, were drunk with the realization of a victory, which after years of struggle, had been easily won. This intoxication was more evident among the so-called intelligentsia than among the much more numerous uneducated population, but agitators everywhere were doing the same successful work of our little black devil of the train. At every street corner, all along the Neva, all day and nearly all night lounged groups of soldiers and sailors, rapidly dismantling themselves of discipline, but ever showing that rough courtesy characteristic of the simple Russians. Credulous and easily swayed, they formed ideal soil in which to implant the seeds of the movement, later to bring about the Bolshevik revolution.

Petrograd never could stand close inspection, and now the streets were dirtier and worse kept than in pre-revolution days, but viewed as a whole, and neglecting an untidy foreground, the city retained its charm. The warm, hazy weather shewed to peculiar advantage the sea of minarets and towers, so oriental in appearance—a delightful background to the broad expanse of the sluggish Neva, with its numerous rafts and barges loaded with firewood, its many busy river craft, and its numerous large steamers, tied up, because those who were still described as the enemy controlled the Baltic.

Even at this time, so early in the revolution, and in the torture through which Petrograd has gone, and is still to go, food was terribly scarce in the city. The bread lines of extraordinarily patient people, so varied in character were interminable and continuous, always waiting, no matter what time of the day or night, stretching at times as much as half a mile from every delivery point. The shop windows displayed nothing except a little stale, tinned stuff, which was often merely a decoy, for nothing could be bought within.

At the best hotels and restaurants, sugarless, milkless tea, and butterless, jamless black bread, with nothing to assist it, began the day. For lunch and dinner one was lucky, indeed, if he could muster up a meat stew or an omelette. In the famous Hôtel de l'Europe, once deservedly boasting the finest restaurant in Petrograd, we were several times turned away without food in the evening, and on another occasion we considered ourselves lucky, indeed, to get some raw

ham, interlarded with half-ripe strawberries, and *kvas*. Still, one fared well at times in private houses, without assistance from which it would have been difficult to keep body and soul alive.

A few days after my arrival—a Sunday—there was a great demonstration in honor of the victims of the first days of the revolution in March. The bodies of those who had been killed at that time, or supposed to have been killed then, or other bodies—it really did not seem to make much difference—had been collected beneath an immense mound of earth situated in the Marsovo Polee. The scheme of the demonstration consisted mainly in a huge procession, which it was proposed would stream down the Nevsky Prospect towards the Marsovo Polee from early morning till late at night doing honor to the martyrs by depositing black flags, red flags, and other political emblems, or flowers, boughs and other decorations on the bier. The principal part of the procession, which was said to have numbered upwards of 400,000, naturally came from Petrograd, but there were detachments from many of the surrounding towns and cities, even as far away as Kronstadt.

Needless to say, there were many interruptions in the progress of the demonstration, especially when subsidiary processions from the branching arteries of traffic joined the main stream in the Nevsky, but in general the affair was orderly. Occasion was taken of the halts by the various political parties—groups from each of which were scattered all along the line—to harangue the crowds thronging the streets. In these discourses, no one, not even the sympathizers who

accompanied any particular orator, seemed to pay much attention, other than to punctuate from time to time by cheering, which had not necessarily any connection with the burning orations being delivered. We expected to see our little black devil of our journey from England and were not disappointed. Somewhere she had discarded her husband, but there she was in the midst of the blackest group of black nihilists. Not only were they dressed in black and bore black flags with sinister inscriptions in red, but their black hair—perhaps only very dirty—and sallow skins, seemed to harmonize with the gloomy viewpoint they took of life in general. Our erstwhile fellow-traveller was among the most vehement and frequent of the speakers, mounting at every stop whatever point was highest in the procession near her, a motor car, or the shoulders of some fellow-processionist—unhappily most of the nihilists were small—to discourse with furious eloquence against the war, the capitalists who were waging it, the Allies in general, and England in particular, the country in which all her favorite doctrines, freely interlarded through her remarks, were unable to make headway.

From early morning till late in the afternoon the procession continued, and comparatively few of the participants ever reached the goal of glory, if, indeed, most of them understood the object of their activities and of the excitement.

In the evening the atmosphere was not so calm. There were occasional fights between varying radical groups. Some firing took place and there were a few casualties. However, the affair

was mild as compared with the description one read later in the foreign press.

This was at the time in Petrograd when Kerensky dominated the scene, and yet he scarcely seemed to be the most interesting personality. Avksentieff, for example—at the beginning of the revolution relatively unimportant—had a fuller realization than the leader, of the possible serious effects of the iconoclastic policy then being pursued in Petrograd, and a clearer vision as to the depth of the troubled waters through which the people must pass before the general liberty which they sought should be attained. The ardor for the revolution and the obsession as to its all embracing merits seemed to increase, the farther one passed outward from his presence through the numerous officials and hangers-on which surrounded him, like every one forming a centre of political influence of the time.

Avksentieff was then President of the Agricultural Societies, and held sway in the old Ministry of Agriculture. At the doorway a so-called guard of lounging sailors and soldiers, who had been rapidly deprived of all semblance of discipline by the events of the preceding few months, admitted everyone without question, and I, among a number who entered at the same time, was escorted to a reception room. Here, while I waited, a voluble lady whose mission it was to receive those who called, discussed at length and most glowingly the wonderful times through which Russia was then passing, and how marvellous would be the happy effect on the outside world when the light of Russia should penetrate

the political gloom of other countries. She, at any rate, had no forebodings as to the future; the millennium for her had come. The clerk who accompanied me to the room of Avksentieff's secretary was less enthusiastic, but still filled with hope. The secretary saw danger on the horizon, while my brief interview with Avksentieff himself, was sufficient to show that radical though he was and sufferer though he had been from the old régime, he realized fully the extent of madness that had swept away all forms of discipline set up thereby.

He was a slight, dark-haired, sallow-complexioned man, with sparkling eyes filled with expression, and with a smile of singular attractiveness. His viewpoint was the only one of those in power whom I met which approached the outlook of the higher military officers. Among these there was no optimism as to the future. The glory of Russia as a military power had set. And yet this was early in July, 1917, when the world was hearing of wonderful victories gained by Russian troops with Kerensky at their head. Little was it realized that these troops were mainly Czecho-Slovaks—not Russians—and that the tens of thousands of prisoners they took were their Czecho-Slovak fellow-countrymen whose chief anxiety was to be taken prisoner, and in that capacity aid in the defeat of the Central Powers.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE JOURNEY ACROSS THE EMPIRE.

The journey between Petrograd and Vladivostok, in the days when regular trains ran between the two cities of the old Russian Empire, lasted about eleven days by express. The trains were excellently equipped, carried a fine restaurant car and numerous first and second class sleepers, including some belonging to the *Compagnie des Wagons Lits*. The trains were thoroughly comfortable, generally well-kept, ran on a good road, bed on a broad gauge track, and provided what was in many ways the best service in the world.

The journey of eleven days was, naturally, somewhat tiresome and, in a certain sense, monotonous, especially on a second or third trip, though the cosmopolitan society one met on the road and the varying human attractions of the country through which one passed, prevented the companionable and gregarious person not suffering from boredom from losing interest.

The northern part of the European continent presents physical features on a large scale and, as far as that portion traversed by the Trans-Siberian Railway is concerned, of a great sameness of character. Leaving Petrograd, an almost level plain stretches seven or eight hundred miles to the Urals. Its monotony is unequalled in Europe. Small stretches of civilization extending outward from the villages relieve to some extent the seemingly limitless forests of pine, spruce, poplar and birch. Occasional ponds and

more frequent sluggish, brown streams are passed, the latter forming highways for sleds in winter and boats in summer. The villages, apart from varying in size, seem all alike; the houses are built mostly of dull, grey, unpainted logs, above which towers the gaily colored church, or churches, in the larger settlements.

From this drab landscape the Urals form a pleasing change. Their low altitude and generally gentle inclines seem scarcely worthy of dignifying them by the name of mountains, but there is much charm in the deep, open valleys and the occasional scarps of red Permian strata which break the dark green of the pine forests creeping up the sides and crowning the crests of the highest hills.

The large and important city of Ekaterinburg lies at the eastern base of the Urals; in pre-Bolshevik days a centre of the mining industry for which the section of the country was famed. The city is devoid of architectural charm, and in bringing it back to memory the through traveller recalls only the raging dust storms which blinded him in summer, or blizzards of snow which froze him in winter. By those who know it well Ekaterinburg is said to have much to recommend it over the cities of Siberia proper, farther to the east.

Eastward of Ekaterinburg the railway enters beautiful rolling land, mostly well cultivated and with stretches of forest which give the whole a particularly pleasing and park-like effect. Gradually, however, the country becomes flatter, the patches of woodland disappear and the country merges into a dreary monotony of the *steppe*—

seen typically in and around the scattered city of Omsk.

From Omsk to Taiga stretches the same level prairie, relieved at intervals by the muddy streams which flow northward across the plain and deeply dissect it; by shallow, marshy ponds, the abode of countless waterfowl in summer; and by squalid settlements with houses huddling closely together for shelter in lessening the effect of the *bourannes* of winter and the hot winds of summer.

Eastward of Taiga the country becomes more interesting. The topography is more varied. A forest of pine, birch, and in places, tamarack appears. The range of industry becomes greater. Taiga is the centre of a coal mining district, the pits of which show in the low and irregular hills near the town. Krasnoyarsk is the centre of the mining industry of the Yenesei, on the banks of which the town is situated. It is more compact than the ordinary Siberian settlement and presents, in consequence, a more business-like appearance.

The station of Irkutsk—the most important town in Siberia—as is the case so frequently in many towns of the former Russian Empire, is situated several miles from the centre of the town, but the traveller gets a good idea of the nature of its inhabitants from the heterogeneous crowd on the platform even if he is unable to study the population at closer range by a visit to the city. It is difficult to say what was the number of people who lived here in pre-war days—perhaps 200,000—a polyglot mixture of ex-convicts, political deportées, soldiers, civil servants, mining promoters and fur traders—all

mainly Russians with a generous sprinkling of Tartars and Jews, and a few of the decadent descendants of the pre-Russian population. The city was, and I suppose still is, the most un-European town, in respect to population, in the old Russian Empire. Without a knowledge of Russian the traveller was lost. English, French, and German, which more especially carried one almost everywhere in former days, were of little avail here unless he inquired the way of one of the numerous French demi-mondaines who found in Irkutsk a veritably successful centre. Like all the cities of Siberia, it has no sewage and no water works, but many of the streets present an imposing appearance, with handsome public buildings bordering broad thoroughfares. Here and there are magnificent private houses built by mining or trading magnates, many of whom, deprived for political reasons of the right of returning to Petrograd or Moscow, lived here in former times in the greatest opulence. The women whom one saw here in the old days surpassed in the splendor of their furs and dresses and in the brilliance of their jewellery, those of Paris, London, or New York.

Leaving Irkutsk, the Trans-Siberian Railway follows the broad, open valley of the clear-watered Angara to Lake Baikal, around the southern and south-western shores of which it passes to the mouth of the river Selyenga. In many respects this section of the route presents the finest scenery of the whole Trans-Siberian journey. The railway line clings to the lake margin, with rugged mountains rising abruptly on the landward side. With each bend are dis-

closed views of great expanses of water, of precipitous headlands or of narrow valleys stretching far inland and losing themselves in a distant maze of snow-covered peaks.

The railway line leaves the shore of Lake Baikal at Meesofsk and ascends the valley of the Selyenga to Verkniiyodensk, situated on sandy terraces which give the place a clean and tidy appearance. Onward to Cheta, lying at the junction of the Cheta and Ingoda, tributaries of the Amur, the line passes through open or sparsely wooded country, park-like in effect. Cheta, the centre of the Trans-Baikalian Cossack settlements, is a fine, large town, very military in appearance, and largely composed of barracks, built, it may be supposed, at least partly, to guard the junction of the two branches of the Trans-Siberian Railway, which separate a short distance beyond Cheta; the one following to the north down the valley of the Amur in a round-about way through Blagovestchensk to Habarovsk and thence to Vladivostok; the other (the Chinese Eastern Railway) much more direct, passing through Manchuria by way of Harbin and Pogranichnaya to Vladivostok.

The western and eastern parts of Northern Manchuria are hilly; the central part a vast plain from the gently rolling surface of which broad, open valleys pass into the hilly country to east and west. The western part is mostly treeless, and scenically monotonous. In fact, this part of the run would be devoid of attraction were it not for the human interest provided by the Burats who inhabit much of the country eastward of Cheta. The great level stretches reaching in

all directions from Harbin form one of the most fertile sections of the earth; the crops of maize, millet, and other grains raised in the hot, moist summer by the Chinese in these parts are so certain that one does not wonder that outside nations with less territory than China covet so rich a heritage. Harbin itself, the centre of the former Russian zone of control along the Chinese Eastern Railway or southern branch of the Trans-Siberian, consists of the foreign town, Harbin proper, and the native town, locally known as the Preestan. The former was laid out by the Russians, and is still in large part occupied by them, though the Japanese influence is growing rapidly and many of the larger buildings and the best building sites are passing into their hands. It is beautifully laid out with broad, regular streets, bordered in many cases by boulevards and interspersed with parks, which in summer give the pleasing effect of a western American city. It would be inexact to say it is clean, because as is the case in the Siberian cities, there is no sanitation whatever, but, at any rate, it looks relatively so, and many of the buildings, more especially those connected with the Chinese Eastern Railway, are highly imposing, and would do credit to a city in any part of the world.

The disappointing features about the place are the great unkempt spaces between the widely separated business buildings. One has to go miles from one office or store to another, and yet if the whole community were shuffled together to ordinary compactness it would not occupy much more than a square mile. In spring, and, in fact, whenever I was there, except

in the winter, which is long and cold, the mud in the streets is terrific, but this reaches its highest state of vileness in the native part of the city along the Sungari River, where there is a maze of narrow streets with wretched shops and houses sheltering hordes of Chinese of apparently a particularly displeasing and filthy type.

Not only the western part of Manchuria, but the adjoining part of Siberia to the eastward—the Maritime Province—is for the most part hilly country. The cultivations in the valleys are generally small and far apart; the upper slopes and crests are covered with dense vegetation containing some fine timber. Scenically, this section of the country is attractive, forming a pleasing change from the plains to the westward. The Chinese Eastern Railway section of the Trans-continental highway joins the main Trans-Siberian Railway at Nikolsk-Ussuriski, a town of some 20,000 people situated in a relatively extensive flat about sixty miles north of Vladivostok.

Even in the calm of pre-bellum days there was always much excitement in getting away from Petrograd on the Trans-Siberian journey, but this was of the most trivial unimportance as compared with the veritable fury which reigned in the Nikolaefsky station on the evening of July 3rd, 1917, the night chosen for my departure to Vladivostok. A coupé for myself and a young British naval officer who had accompanied me from England and was continuing eastward with me on the same mission, had been procured with the greatest possible difficulty through the Russian General Staff, but there was no doubt

whatever as to the genuineness of our tickets giving us absolute right to the compartment assigned to us. The crush of people in the station was great, the jam on the departure platform so terrific that it was next to impossible to reach our car—it was worse than a scrimmage in a football game. When we did get there we had to dispute the right of ownership with both military officers and civilians, who appealed to the station authorities, the guard, and even the car porter. We found these officials serving under a revolutionary régime as amenable to persuasion with the assistance of a rouble or two as they had been in Czarist days, but the ejection of intruders with their luggage, amid a babel of shouts and cries of both sexes and of all ages within and without the car, was not so easy. At last as the train drew out of the station success crowned our physical persistency and oratorical efforts. We were alone, but from that time onward the compartment had to be guarded continually by one or other of us.

To say the train was crowded, conveys little idea of the human congestion. The first class sleeping carriages were not so bad. Here, at least, there was seclusion behind the locked doors of one's compartment, but our less fortunate fellow-travellers filled the passage ways or camped in the platforms between the cars. In the lower grade carriages persons of both sexes, of all ages and of various nationalities, were packed together tighter than sardines in the compartments and overflowed therefrom outward into the passages and beyond into the platforms. They perched on the roofs, clung to the bumpers,

and would, I feel sure, have run behind, had the speed of the train—remarkably steady considering the times—at about twenty miles an hour, not precluded this method of locomotion.

Needless to say, passage through the train brimming with people with every conceivable type of impedimenta, and as the trip wore on further encumbered with an ever-growing mass of rubbish—for the train was never cleaned in all the long journey—was neither easy nor savory and bordered on the impossible. Being a geologist, a section of the train reminded me of a conglomerate in which the people and their baggage formed the boulders and pebbles, and the encrusting and surrounding dirt, the ground mass in the interstices thereof.

Yet on the whole they were a remarkably good-tempered crowd, and quarrels were rare, save at the large stations such as Omsk or Irkutsk, where travellers who had reached these main points by local trains were seeking passage onward by the express. I except political altercations, which we had at every stoppage when the passengers couped up in the passages thronged out for a bit of air—less oxygenic than verbose. Harangues were delivered with fiery eloquence and frequent acerbity by members of every political party, of both sexes, and of every age from childhood to senility. Though there were always crowds around any aggressive speaker, it seemed to me, that as a rule, no one gave either him or her any attention save another also wishing to air his views. He listened only to seize a suitable moment when the speaker stopped for breath to burst into the affray and continue until

a newcomer in turn ousted him from the arena. Some of the best speakers were of moderate views, but they were vastly outnumbered by those of extreme tendencies, whose endless clap-trap in regard to the horrors of life under the old régime, the complete lack of faith of those who were still the allies of Russia, and the urgency of stopping the war, wearying and distressing though it was, seemed to show how effectively German propaganda was operating to stir up the feelings of a people suffering the ill-effects of long-continued mismanagement of the war. There were times when the warfare was not purely wordy, and when blows were exchanged, but, as a rule, the fight was too unequal to allow such excitements to reach any decisive proportions.

Remembering all we had heard of the difficulty of obtaining passage by the Trans-Siberian Railway, of the waiting lists months in advance, we wondered how it was that certain of our fellow-passengers should have obtained places on our particular express. Among these were typical bourgeoisie engaged in all sorts of small business—it would seem mainly disreputable or questionable—carried on between Petrograd and Moscow and the big cities of China and Japan. Some had obtained concessions from the new Government for exclusive rights to trade in furs, or prospect for gold in remote islands of the Sea of Okhotsk, others, in the uncertain shuffle of affairs, aspired to obtain possession of enemy holdings in the Far East which had been appropriated though not sold by the late Government.

It was natural to expect that our train should contain many protagonists of the new régime. These political emissaries of Kerensky were bound to every corner of Siberia, but considering them in retrospect, I recall that the gospel of many resembled less the spoken word of him who was responsible for their dispatch, as of the Bolsheviks who were still to come. Almost without exception they took the view that Russia was so exhausted by her already stupendous efforts, that the Allies were unwarranted to expect any further assistance. This would have seemed reasonable enough had their lengthy explanations been accompanied by regrets, but these were generally lacking.

A saner point of view was held by a distinguished Russian merchant and mine operator who, with his wife and secretary and two well-known geologists of the Russian Geological Survey, was en route to the United States on what was, apparently, a commercial mission for the Government. Their joy at the news of the successes on the Russian front, contained in telegrams received along the route, was undoubted, while the grunts of disapproval or expressions of disbelief from the great majority of the other civilian travellers seemed to shew either a lack of sympathy or at best a lack of interest. Judging by the number of military men aboard, one was led to think that new appointées were being made to every military post of importance in the Far East. This, unfortunately indeed, was largely true. As the Government passed from moderate to liberal, from liberal to extreme, and from extreme to madness, new officers had to be

chosen for almost every significant job, only to be changed again with a new revolution of the political wheel, until scarcely any soldier of any importance would debase himself to accept a position under the Bolshevik Government which was still to come.

However, in July, 1917, my own feelings were not gloomy, I had no unpleasant forebodings. I was filled with confidence in the revolution, in the educational awakening along broad lines for vast millions in Russia, and in the helpful inspiration it would give to the rest of the war-exhausted world. And yet, all around me, as I travelled, there was so much evidence that this optimistic viewpoint was not to be realized.

Among the passengers was one of those charmingly dreamy women, with a beautiful face and figure, with a vivacity of expression and clarity of vision, who are found from time to time in Russia. She was a Red Cross nurse, the wife of a naval officer in Vladivostok, who had been serving in a variety of hospitals at the front. Her story of the rapid demoralization of the soldiers following the issuing of Kerensky's famous first order to the troops, was vivid enough, one would think, looking back upon events, to have impressed anyone open to reason. Her forecast of the events which were to follow was so exact that in retrospect one might be excused for considering her a prophetess.

At Irkutsk, in the terrific struggle for a resting place on the train, almost overwhelming in its ferocity, one of the lucky ones to find a place was a French lady, a typical "*vieille fille*" of the governess variety. She was short, stout, and

uncommonly plain in appearance, but nevertheless inspired by that wonderful patriotism so characteristic of the French, her face, as we talked of the splendid deeds of her countrymen, assumed a glorified expression which completely transformed the generally uncomely features. Hearing someone talk a language so familiar to me amid the Slavic babel of Russian, Polish and Czech, I got into conversation with her. Soon she was rambling on dissertating on the worries of her early life of twelve years in Russian cities as a governess in various middle-class families, ending up within recent years in Irkutsk. How cordially she loathed the Russians! How heartily she blamed them for the prolongation of the war! Their many treacheries spread over the early years of its progress were described with many vivid elaborations of her own fertile and irate brain, and she wound up with a tirade about their final collapse as a powerful assistance to the Allies even before the revolution had begun. As she talked I was reminded of a former French Ambassador in Petrograd who, contemplating the vast peasant population of Russia, considered them in the light of excellent cannon fodder to protect the fair lands of France. We had become good friends by the time we reached the frontier station of Manchuria, where our luggage was most carefully examined by the polite Danish officials of the Chinese customs. While I wandered about the dreary station, from general waiting room into the restaurant—the floors of both of which were thick with the recumbent forms of refugees awaiting a place on some passing train to make their escape—among this mass of smelly

humanity I found my friend. Her face was livid with rage as she demanded from a group of officials that her luggage be taken aboard. Seeing a friend she flung herself at me and begged my assistance to help her from the predicament in which she found herself. But I was of little avail. Her luggage had by some means, which were never explained, reached Manchuria Station a few days before and there was no space whatever for it aboard the express. I aided the officials by explaining the circumstances to her in French, because the only foreign languages they spoke were English, which she did not understand, and Russian, which merely seemed to rile her. She refused, however, to be consoled, and considered her treatment but another evidence of the depravity and trickery of the nation she loathed: "*Une race exécration, détestable, épouvantable.*" The adjectives raced forth as she continued, rising in a crescendo of hate as the despair of relief became implanted in her infuriated brain. I hated to see her left in such a wretched place, amid so much squalor and filth, but there was nothing else to be done; it would have been madness to proceed without her luggage. I advised a drink and this she accepted gladly. In a manner worthy of Paris she drank my health "*Vive les Canadiens*" "*Vive Grande Bretagne.*" And then as I bade her good-bye, because the train was about to leave, she added, "*Monsieur, le dernier conseil que je vous donnerai—et de mon cœur—mefiez toujours les slaves.*"

While the French lady's warnings were still ringing in my ears a day or two later, I made

my first Russian friendship with a man belonging to one of the most illustrious families in Russia, who, according to his story, had suffered terribly from his officers as a private at the front, because the political leanings of his family were radical. He and a friend with whom he was travelling had obtained a mining concession from the Kerensky Government as a recompense for past miseries. Tall and thin, with a pale complexion, and strange, grey eyes, white, even teeth, and glossy, black hair, he was attractive in appearance and a singularly absorbing talker. As I listened to his gruesome stories he seemed to hypnotize me into seeing things as he saw them: the grim cruelty of life for the vast majority under the old régime; the harshness and debaucheries of most of the officers at the front; the uneven struggle of the soldiers generally without arms and equipment or with insufficient food and deserted by their officers in the hour of danger. We parted company soon after our arrival in Vladivostok with, on his part, those expressions of undying regard so characteristic, as I learned, later, of the Russians. I felt that I had become in our short acquaintance an important part of his life, but beyond a brief telegram received some weeks later asking financial assistance, I was never to hear from him again!

Though we realized even then that the chief danger to our cause lay in the agitation being carried on by the defeatists everywhere around us, we considered also the possibility of discovering spy work more subtle in nature, less tangible in character. My naval companion's suspicions early in our journey descended upon a vivacious

lady who spoke to the waiters in the restaurant in French and was never heard to address anyone in Russian. When he learned she occupied a double compartment from which no one was ever observed to enter or leave but herself, there was no doubt in his mind that she was dangerous. Before reaching Vladivostok, however, his mind calmed somewhat on learning that she was the wife of a distinguished Roumanian officer, escaping with her invalid son from the Russians she despised, to join her husband in Japan.

It was in vain we looked for these occasional evidences of the enemy at work. Our puny efforts were futile to stem the tide of successful German propaganda. Before the war they had known Russia much better than any of the Allies; their emissaries had been in every town and village from one end of the Empire to the other; during the bitterest days of the struggle they had never been ousted from the heart of affairs at Moscow and Petrograd, and now that the old régime was no more they were back again, disguised as socialists or greater extremists, doing the same deadly work to increase the distrust and disfavor into which the Allies had fallen. And we Allies did in part deserve this disfavor. In the terrible anxieties of the war we were already beginning to forget that millions of Russians lay dead, fighting for our cause which had been theirs, and that but for the help of these heroes in the beginning of the war, France and even our own Britain might have been in German hands.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE RUSSIAN FAR EAST IN THE AUTUMN OF 1917.

The harbor of Vladivostok, known as the Golden Horn, is one of the finest in the world. It is of irregular shape, about seven miles long, and approximately half as wide at the point of greatest extension. The large, high island, known as Russian Island, land-locks the harbor from the open sea, to which there are two entrances, one to a bay to the eastward, known as the Gulf of Ussuri, and the other to the westward to the Gulf of Amur. The latter channel, relatively narrow and shallow, is used only by small coasting craft, the former, about a mile wide, contains plenty of water for the largest ship afloat. In former days the approaches and entrances to the harbor were well guarded by numerous protective works, while the city itself, lying at the inner northern end of the harbor, formed one of the most highly fortified centres in the world.

The climate of Vladivostok is naturally less extreme than that of interior points, yet the seasonal variations in temperature are very great. The snowfall in winter is scant, but the frosts so severe that the harbor is frozen for over four months in the year, and a passage to the wharves kept open only by ice breakers. The spring is backward; the summer generally hot and foggy with frequent deluges of rain. The autumn is much the finest time of the year.

Entering the harbor of Vladivostok on a clear, calm day in early autumn, one cannot but be struck with the beauty of the situation. The town climbs from the semi-circular rim of water up the steep slopes of the surrounding hills, whose serrate edges stand well demarcated against the deep blue of the sky. The houses encircle the water edge, cling to the slopes, and are perched even on the crest of the surrounding hills around and about the old fortifications. The numerous large public buildings give the city, viewed from the water, an imposing appearance, which a walk on its streets quickly belies. The principal thoroughfares—the Svetlanskaya and the Aleoutskaya—running at right angles and enclosing the foot of the harbor are the only streets paved or cobbled for any distance. The other highways are partly formed or unformed roads, devoid for the most part even of sidewalks, and invariably deeply guttered with great natural ditches down which the water rushes in torrents in wet spells and which form a trap for the unwary at other times.

Architectural beauty there is none, neither Russian, American, nor Eastern, in attempts at all of which the city forms a horrible polyglot. The ubiquitous filth is disgusting. There is not the remotest attempt at sanitation. Pigs and goats wander at large everywhere, reposing at the handsome door of the Cathedral of the Annunciation, the gates of the military barracks or at the entrances to the big shops of the Svetlanskaya. I got quite attached to a very smelly old billy-goat who took up his abode at the door of

the Headquarters Staff and remained unmolested by the various political régimes and the unceasing turmoils through which the city passed. Even the population looks bedraggled and less picturesque than one would expect from its heterogeneous nature. There are about 150,000 people in the city and in the suburbs, which straggle up several valleys leading from the harbor. Of this number about one-third are Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans.

Vladivostok, in July, 1917, was actually in the hands of the Committee of Labor and Soldier Deputies, though a semblance of superior authority was maintained even here by Rousanoff, Kerensky's representative in the Far East, whose headquarters were at Habarovsk, the capital of the Maritime Province, 375 miles north of Vladivostok. Rousanoff was represented in Vladivostok by a local commissar, nominally a great man, but with no more authority than a bantam cock in a barnyard. Rousanoff himself was a dark, untidy, little man, with a great mass of whiskers, in which his voice seemed to lose itself, or at any rate, was so much sifted that it was practically inaudible. He spent most of his time at Habarovsk, but from time to time "blew" into Vladivostok in his private car, fired off very lengthy telegrams to the central government at Petrograd or to the management of the Chinese Eastern Railway at Harbin, issued edicts to local organizations to which no attention whatever was paid, or received deputations, the futility of which seemed a foregone conclusion before they had arrived.

The power of Rousanoff, meagre though it was, at any rate was greater than that of the Military, whose semblance of authority was but the shadow of what it had been in pre-revolution days. The barracks, which, in and around Vladivostok, had splendid accommodation for upwards of 50,000 troops were still filled with soldiers, but in the new order of things training had ceased and discipline had vanished. A few crestfallen officers still hung around the buildings where they had formerly exercised a rigid control, but their influence was gone, and they accepted the change with a depressing lack of spirit and initiative. One felt that leaders so lacking in nerve deserved no better fate than that which had befallen them.

The barracks were run by the soldiers, who dictated to their officers as they saw fit. No more was a lieutenant or captain addressed as "Your Highly-born," a colonel as "Your Very Highly-born," and a general as "Your Excellency." They were fortunate if they were called by the soldiers "Sir Captain," "Sir Colonel," or "Sir General," as the case might be. Even the unsophisticated stranger dropped unconsciously into the new method of address. At a reception at the Japanese consulate on the occasion of the birthday of the Mikado, in a moment of mental aberration, I was so unfortunate as to address the officer in command of the fortress of Vladivostok as "Sir General." We were sitting at a little round table with three or four other Russian colonels and generals, when quite unintentionally I made this unhappy *faux pas*. They were all more or less drunk, but not so much so

as to prevent them with one accord falling upon me and accusing me of extreme radical tendencies. The general in question, whose inability to assist his subordinates in stemming the rapidly heightening tide of anarchy among the soldiers was well known, committed suicide some months later in a fit of despair. He and his *confrères* accepted my very sincere apologies to the accompaniment of multitudinous maudlin embraces, but I am sure none of them ever secretly forgave me.

The real power in Vladivostok, as in most other Russian centres, was to be found in the Executive of the Committee of Labor and Soldier Deputies. This organization, in the summer of 1917, was Socialist Revolutionary in tone, but it was evident that the tendency towards Bolshevism was already strong. Under the auspices of the committee, meetings attended by thousands of soldiers and workers took place nightly in a great building known as the People's House, where the wildest views were expressed by fiery orators, many of whom were women. Revolutionary processions were a frequent occurrence through the principal streets, which generally wound up in vast out-of-door meetings in the square outside the railway station opposite the British Consulate and the Military Staff Headquarters.

Armed with a letter of introduction from Avksentieff to the President of the Committee of Labor and Soldier Deputies or Soviet, couched in flowery language, and describing me as "a comrade from beyond the seas" I early endeavored

to present myself to the president, a Jew, whose chief object in life was reported to be his own self-protection. He was on the point of leaving for Petrograd, and I failed to see him. I did, however, meet his first assistant, Mikaeleff by name, who on the Jew's departure, became president in his stead. Mikaeleff had been a non-commissioned officer in a railway battalion, and was endowed with rather more common-sense than most of those controlling the Soviet. In spite of occasional fits of drunkenness, he endeavored, during his régime, which lasted until the Bolsheviki came into power at the end of the year, to give expression to relatively moderate views and to denounce the suggestions of a premature peace with Germany, which were already being widely expressed.

Another important influence in local affairs at the time was what was known as the Committee of Public Safety. This organization had come into being immediately after the overthrow of the old régime, with the laudable object of protecting the public until such time as a more permanent means of maintaining law and order had been established. Naturally it had early fallen under the sinister influence of the Soviet from whose ranks its president, Dr. Fortunatoff, a revolutionary with many prison terms to his credit, had been chosen. This committee was chiefly concerned with the examination of persons arriving and departing from the port, and no one could come or go without its permission. Fortunatoff was the leading spirit of the committee, but he was assisted, at least nominally,

by a number of other members of the Soviet, among whom the most interesting was a distinguished ex-jailbird, Citizeness Bubenko, and by several officers who were members of the contra-espionage section of the military. Fortunatoff and I soon established friendly relations and it was at his suggestion that I joined the committee as a sort of unofficial representative of the Allies.

The departing steamers gave us little trouble, but the incoming, jammed to overflowing with what were alleged to be Russian political refugees returning to the new political paradise, formed a much more difficult problem. The plan was to meet each incoming steamer—two a week—at the entrance to the harbor, where the passports of the passengers were examined before the ship was allowed to proceed to the wharf. As there was an absolute uncertainty as to the time the boat should appear, we generally departed to meet it soon after dawn, only to roll round in our smelly little craft in the swell of the big waves coming in from the heads, without any food, till late in the afternoon. It was on one of these occasions, faint with fatigue and hunger, that I learned to appreciate to the full the excellence of Citizeness Bubenko. She had been displaying with swelling pride a long pair of white, kid boots which covered her copious legs to the knees and describing meanwhile how these were no Russian footgear, but very classy things from Shanghai, when she suddenly observed "You are ill, Tavaritsch (comrade), you must lie down." Putting her words into action she moved me into a near-by

cot, and opening a huge bag at her waist, drew therefrom a large flask of vodka. We had a drink or two, the dismal surroundings became less sombre, the gnawing hunger subsided, the waves seemed to abate, the conversation of my associates grew more interesting!

Bubenko and Fortunatoff had been prisoners in the same jail at Kieff, and for a time she was his right hand, but for some reason, which was never explained, she seemed to pass out of favor, and our bi-weekly expeditions were less enlivening when her big, breezy personality was withdrawn. The personnel of the inspecting party was, in fact, constantly changing. With each foregathering of the inspecting party on the little escorting boat, old faces disappeared and new ones took their place. At first I wondered why newcomers were accepted with such general enthusiasm, embraced, kissed, and even wept over. It took some time to realize that many were being welcomed from years of misery in prison, where, on account of political murders or less serious crimes, they had been languishing. After the initial greetings were over, the heroes or criminals—it all depended on one's point of view—displayed the long, purple lines of the Cossack knout, the deeper scars of the soldier's boot, or even the mark of a police bullet. They were examined by our old-timers with mixed feelings of rage and admiration, and not infrequently to the accompaniment of a fierce revolutionary song, which fairly rocked the little craft as it ambled across the harbor. Generally renewed kissing and embracing, and even weeping

followed, all of which lent diversion to the scene as we waited for the incoming boat.

When the steamer was safely within the heads our boat drew alongside and we all went aboard, a soldier representative generally carrying a red flag before us. The refugees were assembled and a fiery address of welcome given to the great, new free Russia. Afterwards Fortunatoff and I with one or more assistants, examined the passports. A few months before, in the days of the old régime, not one in five hundred of the refugees who jammed the ship to overflowing would have had a hope of being admitted. Now the only ones, except foreigners who were viewed with suspicion, were those who, erstwhile, would have been considered eminently respectable. These—officers of the army and navy, noblemen or the like—were invariably described to suit my British tastes as Germanophile, but I was not long deceived, and soon learned that among the crowd of long-haired, greasy-looking folk mingled enemy agents by the dozen, who were admitted almost without question. The reasons why passengers were at times held up were so trivial as compared with the obvious causes why others should not have been admitted, that I came to consider these upon whom suspicion was cast as being, at least politically, desirable. On one occasion a French woman, of whose lack of morals there could be no doubt, arrived. Fortunatoff at once classed her as a German spy (not that that would have been to him a serious allegation) because she had been seen to hand a mysterious piece of paper to the stewardess as

the ship was entering the harbor. The document turned out to be a laundry receipt which the examiners were shewn, without being convinced, and it was only when I had solicited the aid of the French consul in her behalf that she was allowed to land. Had she been deported on moral grounds—she was a thoroughly bad lot—one might have understood, but this unfortunately was not the reason why she was kept aboard for hours, raging at the Russians, whose language she did not understand. Fortunatoff, no doubt, found her a useful butt upon whom to direct suspicion to protect from observation various persons who arrived that day.

Almost every boat brought either an American Red Cross unit, Y.M.C.A. organization, or some other philanthropic effort, whom Fortunatoff invariably received with great solemnity and circumstance. The intense earnestness of all these good people, so impressive at the time, seemed almost pathetic in the light of the failures which accompanied their excellent endeavors. They were so terribly anxious to be away from Vladivostok and into the heart of activities in European Russia, but most of them even more desirous of kicking the dust of Russian republicanism from their feet on their return a month or two later.

Early in October I was induced to make a trip to Habarovsk to see the Chief of Staff, General Domanyefski (who had followed quickly on several other holders of the office) to see if something could not be done to interest the thousands of idle troops in and around Vladivostok in some sort of training, which would not savor of the

old régime. My idea was to form a class of picked men, to whom should be taught physical training and various sports along the lines followed by the British army. Fortunatoff, who was quite intelligent enough to realize the danger of the increasing lawlessness of the troops as a result of their idleness, would have preferred to see them quietly disband, but this the soldiers did not themselves wish to do, so, perforce, he was inclined to think well of my scheme. Consequently, partly with the object of watching me, and partly with the view of attending to some of his own affairs, he decided to accompany me to Habarovsk.

When we came to depart, it was somewhat disconcerting to find in the same car two Russian officer friends of mine to whom, I knew, Fortunatoff was anathema. I felt sure they would fly at each others throats, but to my surprise, their mutual greetings were most cordial, and seemingly the most friendly relations were at once established over the first *zakouska* and vodka of the journey. However, this cordiality merely served to mask their real feelings. Fortunatoff, in the seclusion of our own compartment, confided what he and his confrères would do to the remaining bourgeoisie when the last remnant of interference was removed with the approaching complete ascendancy of the Bolsheviks, which he so clearly foresaw; while my soldier friends, as we walked together at the numerous places where we stopped, were equally vehement as to how Fortunatoff and his ilk would fare when the reactionaries should succeed, as to them seemed

inevitable. Fortunatoff was meanwhile busy haranguing the crowd of loungers at the station, or prompting an orator more vehement than he then dared to be, or engaged in the more useful occupation of replenishing our larder from one of the numerous little peasant boutiques, so characteristic of the Russian wayside station.

Habarovsk, situated at the confluence of the Amur and its tributary, the Sungari, is to my mind the most attractive city in eastern Siberia. Laid out on generous lines, it has broad streets, and numerous boulevards and parks, which display to advantage its cathedral and other fine buildings. The climate is brighter and colder than that of Vladivostok, and already a light sprinkle of snow was visible, giving a charming effect to the low hills and steep banks of the great river which was still unfrozen.

I had a most cordial reception from General Domanyefski, whose nervous manner shewed clearly the trying nature of his position. Fortunatoff was present at our long interview, but as he understood French very imperfectly, in which language Domanyefski insisted on conversing, I don't think even he gleaned much of an idea of what passed. Domanyefski received my suggestions, made directly and through the intermediary of M. Kourinkov, the Russian representative for foreign affairs at Habarovsk, in a most kindly manner, but was so anxious to tell me of his woes and those of his class since the passage of the infamous "first order to the troops" that little progress was made.

On the night of my arrival in Habarovsk I had

an unexpected insight into Russian military life which gave Fortunatoff an opportunity to abuse very whole-heartedly the officers of his country. We were taking a late supper with a young *chenovnik* or clerk in the last of a row of booths opening from the central dining hall of the Hôtel de Petrograd. A door with a fanlight above connected our booth with the next one. The door was closed, but it was evident from the sound of jollity within and the light from the fanlight that the booth was occupied. Our observant *chenovnik* noticed that the lights after a while were extinguished and then again lighted. This excited his curiosity, which finally getting the better of him, he peeked through the key-hole and saw there a colonel of his acquaintance with two demi-mondaines. Conversation through the fanlight followed, and the colonel was induced to open the door and admit us to his company. The women were of the fat, dark, sensual type, which seems to be so popular in Russia, but it would be difficult to imagine more unpleasant members of their sex. The colonel, who was middle-aged, seemed a pleasant enough sort of fellow. It was necessary, so he explained, to engage in this sort of relaxation to enable one to forget the troublesome times. Fortunatoff and I soon withdrew, and a tirade against the old régime, especially its military expression, followed, with which, on that occasion at least, I confess not being entirely unsympathetic. "That is your typical Russian officer," he said. "Vodka and women, not a thought for his country or for anything but self."

The journey back to Vladivostok was enlivened by a variety of amusing and instructive incidents. The morning after leaving Habarovsk a fine-looking Russian sailor whom I had noticed watching me closely on several occasions, pushed his way up to me and said, not at all impolitely: "Tell me, please, are you a Turkish general or an American lieutenant?" At first I was inclined to take offence that my Highland uniform should have been mistaken for that of an enemy or for the rather dull officer's dress of one of our allies, but seeing that he was thoroughly sincere, I hastened to explain that as Russia was still, at least nominally, at war with Turkey, no Turkish officers would be at large, and that American soldiers had not yet reached Siberia. He accepted my explanation, and listened patiently while I told him what Scottish soldiers had done in the war, and what our uniform meant to us. Then I had an oration: The war was over; liberty, equality and fraternity had come; the Russian revolution had saved the world, etc., etc. —a full half-hour of pure pathetic rubbish, gleaned from the numerous agitators at the time being poured into every part of Russia. He was en route to the All-Siberian meeting of the Soviets to decide upon the question of peace with the central powers, as a delegate from Habarovsk. It was an excellent opportunity, and I endeavored to make full use of my time to convert him to the right point of view. I afterwards heard he voted against a separate peace at Irkutsk.

The apartment adjoining us was occupied by

a very prosperous looking person, with a wonderful sable fur coat, who, I was told, was a rich fish merchant returning from Nikolaefsk. A Japanese lady, presumably his wife, accompanied him. Fortunatoff was vehement in his abuse of so typical a bourgeois. As we neared Vladivostok a number of Fortunatoff's revolutionary friends joined us, and politics were discussed at length. The door of our compartment was open, as was that of our neighbor. Seeing a badly wounded and much dejected soldier standing in the corridor, I beckoned him to take a seat with us. He was old-fashioned and at first refused as he had only a fourth-class ticket, but discipline, after some persuasion, gave way to weariness of the flesh, and he was squeezed in amongst us. He had a terribly sad story to tell, not a word to say against his officers, but a harrowing wail of fearful privations at the Carpathian front, followed by starvation at Kieff, his native city, and then the long journey with the few roubles he could collect from the sale of his small possessions, battling with a crowd of refugees, and frequently beaten from the trains, to Harbin, where his remaining three hundred roubles had been stolen by a fellow traveller. There was no doubt he was telling the truth; no story so wonderfully graphically told by a simple peasant could have been invented, but he did not move my associates. It was all the fault of the capitalists. The poor soldier with his sadly mutilated figure, his crutches, his misery, and his proud row of medals, including the Cross of St. George, was forgotten as the rage against the

old régime continued, but the story had not gone unheard. Suddenly the big form of our neighbor appeared. Leaning over the soldier, he embraced him, whispered a few words in his ear, and was gone. The boy crossed himself, burst into tears, and hobbled out to thank his benefactor, who had more than made good the loss. It was one of those touchingly human incidents, so truly Russian in its character, that even the Bolsheviks for a time forgot to rail.

Vladivostok at this time was jammed with refugees from the far-away interior, who poured in by every incoming train. The hotels had long since ceased to have any accommodation; even huge bribes failed to find one a bed. Every lodging house was filled. The station and other public buildings found room for hundreds who slept on the floor. The British Consulate was sometimes so crowded that as many as three people were parked on the billiard table, yet the consul's unfailing kindness and consideration never flagged, not even when a French lady, whose husband was British, landed upon him with her five babies, and he had to give up his spare bedroom to them, while the servants scrambled for food for such a houseful. Needless to say, among this crowd of generally decent folk, were many of the scum of the earth—bad politically, morally, and every other way. I need mention only one of them, an engaging woman, whose nationality remained a mystery. She seemed able to converse with equal fluency in five or six languages. She had been examined, and the boat on which she was a traveller, had

departed for Japan. "Now I am safe," she was heard by an American engineer, to exclaim to her confederates. But the crew mutinied; the ship returned to Vladivostok, and information about her was given by the American to the naval officer who had come with me from England. What a pile of incriminating information was found on her! Letters to and from many Allied officers in Petrograd, together with photographs galore of all sorts of people and places, all evidently intended for her German confederates in China.

Soon after my return from Habarovsk it was arranged that I should address the soldiers of the Fourth Regiment on a scheme of training discussed with General Domanyefski. A young Russian, naturalized in Australia as a British subject, and unquestionably sincere in his Bolshevik point of view, organized the meeting which took place in the regimental barracks. The officer commanding at Vladivostok, on whom I called to ask permission to speak to the soldiers, at first refused, but later sent word to the consulate that he had "nothing against" my doing so. A huge crowd of soldiers greeted me, and as I looked down upon them from the platform, my heart ached to think that they were not available to assist our hard pressed men on the western front. Physically, no officer could have wished for a finer lot of men. After a flowery speech from the chairman, filled with the usual platitudes, I gave a short address, explaining the necessity of Russia sticking by her allies, urging the men to listen to their officers, and to keep to training. I am afraid the speech had but little

effect. A vigorous argument followed, some upholding my point of view, others combating it. What depressed me most was not so much this adverse criticism from the men as the entire lack of interest taken in the proceedings by the two dispirited officers present. They had, indeed, my sympathy for the unhappy position in which they were placed, but it was clear that much could have been done with such material if a little of that spirit of leadership accompanied by comradeship, which we know in our army, had been shown. Later I gave a demonstration in bayonet fighting and physical training, in which the greatest interest was displayed, and it was arranged that a course should be started at once if the necessary permission could be obtained. Afterwards an inspection of the barracks was made, and it was a surprise to find everything in such good shape. I fancy it had received a thorough tidying prior to my visit.

It was unfortunate that the idea of the course in physical training could not have been carried into practice. I believe much could have been done at that time by persuasion and explanation, which, later, after the unpleasant events of the months following, became impossible.

A day or two after the meeting word was received recalling me to England, and I left almost immediately afterwards by way of Harbin, Korea and Japan. There was a great send-off with every variety of political thought, as far as the Russian element was concerned, on the platform. The general in command at Vladivostok expressed the deepest regret at a British officer

being taken away. Mikalaeff, the president of the Soviet, gave vent with apparently equal sincerity to the same feeling. Both feared the rapidly growing power of the Bolsheviki, who were so shortly to gain complete control at Vladivostok, as they had already done farther west. Fortunatoff and I had always been quite friendly; moreover, he was an astute politician, and in the event of the Allies looking upon his party with favor he wanted to be prepared. Consequently, his farewell was the most cordial of all, and he hastened to assure me I should be soon back once more. A deputation came from the Fourth Regiment with an address to British soldiers which is so typical of the point of view held at that time by the ignorant, but sincere Bolshevik idealist that it seems apropos to give it in full:

#### “GREETINGS TO OUR ALLIES

“We, privates of the 9th Company, 4th Artillery Regiment, send our heartiest greetings to you, brother soldiers, who are citizens of cultured countries.

“At the present time we have in Russia a revolution, which perhaps for you seems premature or out of place in this terrible world-struggle. It would be so were it not that the Russian nation has been cheated by the Czar Nicholas II and his selfish bureaucrats. But when the Russian people had removed the monarch, unfortunately the power passed into the hands of political adventurers who, in their turn, have done evil to Russia. Party-fighting amongst

"themselves has led them to forget the terrible  
"needs of their country.

"Blindly trusting in the new saviours of their  
"country, in the promises of these political ad-  
"venturers, in the honeyed words of these orators,  
"the Russian people patiently awaited the ful-  
"filment of those promises. Meanwhile the  
"enemies of the new freedom did not sleep, and  
"did everything in their power to disorganize  
"affairs. The Government put in power after  
"Nicholas II did not fulfil their promises or  
"carry out the demands of the newly-awakened  
"nation.

"These demands of the people were:

"1. The publication of the secret treaties  
between Nicholas II and the Allies.

"2. The dissemination of the knowledge of  
the real cause of the war.

"3. The allied countries should be asked to  
make an effort to bring about peace.

"4. All land should belong to the working-  
people, and land should no longer be  
bought or sold.

"5. The people's control of all industries.

"6. And *finally*—Russia should appeal to *all*  
the belligerents to consider terms of  
peace *in this guise*—'peace without an-  
nexation or indemnity' and that when  
peace was being discussed, even the  
*smallest* of the belligerent countries  
should decide its own fate.

"These, then were the demands made to the  
"new Russian government. These were the de-  
"mands that were unfulfilled by the Government

“of Kerensky. The government not only cheated  
 “the people, but while fighting for party power  
 “exposed the Russian *soldiers* and *people* to great  
 “privations, such as shortage and high cost of  
 “food and extreme disorganization of national  
 “affairs.

“Citizen Soldiers, above is but a short explana-  
 “tion of our present internal struggle during such  
 “a serious time. Do not, therefore, condemn us.  
 “We are not traitors. We do not want separate  
 “peace, but we beg of you to help us to make  
 “peace equally for all belligerents on the above  
 “terms. If our enemies will not consider such  
 “a peace, then, brothers, we Russians will die  
 “as one man, fighting for the freedom of the  
 “world from the horrors of Prussianism. Once  
 “again we give you greetings, and ask you to  
 “join in our watchword, ‘Peace without annexa-  
 “tion or indemnity.’ If we cannot get that then  
 “War to the end.’

“Long live Internationalism,

“Fortress, Vladivostok,

“November 28th, 1917.”

## CHAPTER IV.

### MANCHURIA IN THE AUTUMN OF 1917.

A week or two after my arrival in Vladivostok, Fortunatoff persuaded me to make a trip to Harbin with him. From my own point of view it was desirable for a variety of reasons, and Fortunatoff was most anxious to establish a close connection between the Vladivostok Committee of Public Safety and similar organizations at Harbin and the towns in Manchuria within the Russian zone of control along the Chinese Eastern Railway. This first visit led to several others, and, as previously mentioned, I passed that way on my return journey to England.

My first night in Harbin is not likely soon to be forgotten; it proved a real Russian party. We arrived about ten o'clock, and were met by a friend of Fortunatoff's, who had reserved two tiny rooms—I don't know by what system of corruption he ever managed to get hold of them—at an hotel, one for myself and one for Fortunatoff and his wife. How the two of them ever contrived to sleep on a thirty-inch cot provided for their two portly frames remains a mystery.

At half past eleven we set out—my friends all wonderfully bescented—to see the town. We first of all went to the big railway club, where we had a huge spread: *zakouski* galore, washed down with quarts of vodka; a great variety of fish and meat and more vodka; and frozen pudding with liqueurs. This feast kept us going till

two o'clock, when we walked for awhile in the garden and listened to an excellent band, which was still playing even at this early hour. Then we repaired to a gambling place, such as would be described in San Francisco or Shanghai as a "joint." Here were various roulette tables, and innumerable tables for cards, at all of which games of a variety of kinds, quite new to me, were proceeding. Fortunatoff, having won a couple of thousand roubles in a fortunate spin at a roulette, joined a large table of card players. Here he gained more money, so that he could not be induced to leave until, his stakes reaching what seemed to be staggering proportions for a "poor" government official, fortune forsook him. His wife, a kindly creature, madonna-like in appearance, sat meanwhile in an ante-room, where tiring of watching the gamblers, I joined her. Perhaps influenced to some extent by the good supper we had recently partaken, or possibly by one of those sudden periods of inspiration which come to Russians, like other people, at times in the small hours of the night, she burst into an eloquent account of her special political dogmas. She, like her husband, had suffered greatly under the old régime, and I fancy much less deservedly. As she talked I was reminded of the "Sermon on the Mount," her philosophy seemed so pure and holy, though she vigorously denied any belief in God, and mentioned as evidence the fact that her children were not cursed by the saints' names proscribed by the Russian Church. She had met her husband in prison, and had since followed him devotedly through all his tribulations.

Her husband, still considerably richer than when he had arrived, joined us as she was in the midst of her harangue, and warmly seconded all her noble, if somewhat unrealizable, utterances.

I had hoped that now we should be able to return to our hotel, but no, Fortunatoff was determined to continue the round of entertainment. We must go to a notorious café chantante. Madame and I were escorted to our hotel, as this feature was considered scarcely within her line and not to my liking.

After the night's round of excitement, which for my friends did not end when I was finally able, just before dawn, to get away from them, I expected to find them in my own state of collapse, but quite the reverse was the case; they were as fresh, apparently, as if they had had nine hours' sleep, rather than none at all.

The outstanding figure in Harbin at this time was General Horvat, who had, in fact, dominated this centre of Russian affairs in Manchuria for a number of years. His presidency of the Chinese Eastern Railway, the main influence which had built up the Russian town at Harbin, had begun soon after the close of the Russo-Japanese war, in which he had served as a prominent and distinguished officer of the Engineers. Accustomed to being the recipient of large political favors from the old régime, he was loth to recognize the revolutionary government, but with that skilful strategy which ordinarily characterized him he did so with alacrity once he realized that the new state of affairs was a *fait accompli*.

It may be said that one of the most baffling difficulties the Western European experiences in dealing with the Russian is to be found in his white skin. The well-educated Russian one ordinarily meets looks western, while almost invariably his point of view is eastern. General Horvat, however, did not unconsciously deceive one in this respect. Were he dressed in the garments one ordinarily associates with Abraham of old, rather than in his Russian military uniform, one would feel transported backward on a magic carpet to the time of the Jewish patriarch. The imposing presence, the tall, ample form, the long, flowing, white beard, the piercing, black eyes, the somewhat swarthy skin, all seemed to fit the part. His policy at Harbin agreed with his appearance—it was plainly eastern—a feature to which, more than to any unusual ability, may be ascribed his long period of success in dealing with Japanese and Chinese, and in accomplishing much for his own advantage and his country's by alternatively setting one influence against the other with a subtle cunning worthy of the shrewdest Oriental diplomat.

The day after our night-long festivities we were received by the great man in his palatial offices at the directorate of the Chinese Eastern Railway. His manners, then, as on the many succeeding occasions I was to meet him, were magnificent, suave, urbane, and distinguished. He seemed to be no less gracious to my Bolshevik associate, with apparently a complete and sympathetic understanding of our wishes. We were promised practically everything which we sought, and yet none of the promises were fulfilled, nor

do I think that he had ever any serious intention of being of assistance!

The conversations, which were long and tiresome, were conducted around a round table, littered with ends of cigarettes, which the Russians, with the exception of Fortunatoff, smoked in vast quantities in between the gulps of hot tea, which was brought in for our refreshment. I could not help contrasting the meeting with the interview one might have with an English or American railway magnate, where a few minutes would ordinarily suffice for a matter of business, and indeed all that one would ordinarily be allowed.

It was a pleasing change to find someone who, apparently at any rate, was not at this time afraid of the Soviets. He handled them as skilfully as he did the Japanese, Chinese, and the various other conflicting interests in Harbin. He allowed them to talk, but had his own representatives hidden in their midst, who tactfully influenced proceedings generally to the benefit of Horvat, and the improvement of his prestige. His emissaries were everywhere, in the big shops and warehouses, among the Chinese merchants and coolies, in the better hotels and in the lowest resorts, proving a capable survival of the secret service, which had largely come to grief in other Russian cities.

Harbin is ordinarily classed by travellers as one of the world's moral cesspits, and it is not entirely undeserving of this unenviable reputation. The city was the resort of the soldiers behind the lines at the time of the Russo-Japanese

war, and it is not remarkable that succeeding years have seen but little purification. The dives of almost every description, and run, apparently, by nationalities from almost every quarter of the globe, are innumerable. French demi-mondaines are the most popular, but Japanese geishas give an Oriental touch to vice here, as elsewhere in the east. The hotels of Harbin are execrable. One expected them to be jammed, but one could not forgive the ubiquitous filth therein. Never did I see anything described as sanitary appliances which were a more flagrant travesty on the name. In delightfully pleasing contrast are the Japanese hotels at Chan-Chung and Mukden, modelled on the American style, and replete in every modern comfort which the ordinary traveller might desire.

Chan-Chung stands at the point where the Japanese-owned railway to Mukden and Foosan begins and the Russian-owned Chinese Eastern Railway ends. There is a Russian controlled town at the actual Russian terminus called Kwan-Tgenzi, the Russian and Japanese stations being about a mile apart. At Kwan-Tgenzi the Russians maintained a fairly effective control point so long as there was any semblance of authority within their unhappy country. But it was easy to escape its carelessly watchful eye by the simple process of alighting at a station or two away and driving, or more correctly, riding—because the roads were merely sloughs of mud—round the control point.

Chan-Chung is almost entirely a Chinese town, but the Japanese seem to be emulating the

Russians at Harbin, and are building a modern city which seems to revolve around the hotel. There are hospitals, large warehouses and barracks which at the time of my visit, were crammed with Japanese soldiers. The place was literally packed with enemy agents masquerading commonly as Americans, and more rarely as English. Once, at the Yamato Hotel, I remember inquiring the hour of departure of a train from a fine, up-standing-looking man, whom I took for an Englishman, but who later turned out, despite his entire lack of accent, to be an Austrian. The woman who passed as his wife was even more skilfully disguised. She looked as if she might have stepped out of an English rectory, her voice and appearance fitting the part thoroughly.

The enemy agents were especially active at Chan-Chung, prior to China's entering the war on the side of the Allies, and while Russia was still a potential force. Later, the town formed the distributing centre for pro-Bolshevik funds—an effective means of bringing about the complete collapse of a formerly powerful opponent. By this time the Chinese kept a fairly careful watch on the Germans, but the latter found plenty of Russians to act for them in carrying out this Empire-wrecking work.

A short stay in Manchuria was quite sufficient to shew that Russian rule is more popular than that of Japan. The *laissez aller* spirit, especially characteristic of the old régime, the lack of interference with personal liberty suited the Chinese better than what they look upon as a hypocritical effort on the part of the Japanese to

imitate western European ways. The Russian, whether on account of an inherent eastern character or for some other reason, does not adopt an air of superiority with his Chinese brother. The laborers of the two nationalities work, live, sleep, and eat quite happily together. Imagine, by way of contrast, the superior air of the American or British workman with Orientals!

I remember an excellent Chinese cook we had at Vladivostok who had three wives, one Chinese in China, another Chinese at Vladivostok, and the third, a Russian. He lived with each in turn on various occasions, and apparently got on quite happily with them all. At any rate, he had three sets of families, whose photographs with their respective mothers were prominently displayed in his bedroom. However, he confessed to preferring the Russian; she asked fewer questions than the others.

The Japanese seem, in fact, to be carrying on their campaign of aggression without much sympathy from other nations. Their methods of propaganda are at times rather quaint. The organ known as the *South Manchurian Daily News*, by which they distribute in English, Japanese-colored information, is an amusing example of this national paranoia. The war news was almost invariably incorrect—I don't mean the expressions of opinion, because in this connection our own journals did not always display an illustrious example—but in the mere statement and description of events.

One night my wife (who had joined me just before my departure from the East) and I arrived

at the Yamato Hotel in Mukden at three o'clock in the morning, and were registered as Major and Mrs. Mackintosh Bell. That day we spent at our consulate at Mukden and at night left for our legation at Pekin. This information was chronicled among the personal items in the "South Manchurian Daily News" as follows: "Major Bell and Mrs. Manton arrived last night at the Yamato Hotel, and having spent the night together, visited the British Consulate during the day, and last evening passed south to the British Legation in Pekin." It was disconcerting that our consular and diplomatic establishments should have had such racy guests! On our return journey from Pekin we travelled through Mukden to Foosan, where we took the boat to Japan. We had a few hours to wait at Mukden for the through train from Chan-Chung southward, and had a quiet dinner at the Yamato Hotel with our consul and the military attaché from the legation in Pekin. After dinner, these gentlemen escorted us to our coupé, and were no less amused than ourselves at the notice laboriously written by a Japanese on the door. It ran "This compartment reserved by the British Legation for Mr. Mager and Miss Mackintosh." It was no wonder after this announcement that, despite the possession of a marvellous open letter from the Japanese Embassy in Pekin to the officials along the route we were to pass, every one of them made suspicious inquiries as to who was the lady with whom I was travelling.

Just before we arrived at Seoul, a neat little man appeared before us as we were finishing our

evening meal, after having sent in a card written in English, which stated he was a reporter on one of the prominent Japanese papers. After bowing many times, he advanced, and looking very straight at me, said sententiously, "You are a Canadian General." "No, No," I replied, "Only a Major." He paid no attention to this remark, and again said, "You are a Canadian General." Again I contradicted him, but it was useless. Once more he repeated slowly the words elevating me many degrees in rank. Having satisfied himself that I was not going to evade my responsibility, he said, "Seoul very soon, you and lady walk up and down." This operation he illustrated by moving his second and third fingers rapidly across the table. After a few questions, the English of which we failed completely to understand, he started bowing again and then departed, drawing his breath in very loudly in the polite Japanese way. On reaching the station we got out for a breather. The huge platform was absolutely bare, though the crowd behind the wire fence separating it from the platform was large and clamoring. A bright light flared on our right, accompanied by the click, click, of a cinematographic camera. This was the reason why the "Canadian General" and the bold lady with whom he was travelling, were requested to "walk up and down." This absurd performance over, the iron gates were flung open wide, and an avalanche of white-garbed Koreans and kimona-clad Japanese burst down upon us, to the accompaniment of a clattering din of wooden shoes upon the cement floor. It was so

terrifying we took to our heels and raced for our compartment.

To revert to Harbin, political conditions underwent considerable change, as the hot summer gave place to the brief, brisk autumn and the long, intensely cold winter set in. During the summer the Moderate or Kerensky party had gradually been losing its hold, the adherents thereof aligning themselves with one or other of the extremes on either side—the Reactionaries and Bolsheviks. The Reactionaries were much stronger at Harbin than at Vladivostok, largely because of the powerful influence of Geneval Horvat, whose strong guiding hand even the Bolsheviks considered necessary for the safe conduct of affairs in the difficult position of handling a railway—to which nearly everyone owed his livelihood—in Chinese territory coveted by the ever-watchful Japanese. The place was filled with officer refugees, the dissipated excesses of most of whom were notorious, though not sufficient to alienate the sympathies of the best of the ever-indulgent and generally forgiving Russian section of the population.

In political matters at Harbin I was guided largely by Kazi-Garae, the chief engineer of the Chinese Eastern, whose friendship forms one of the most pleasing memories of my Russian experiences during the war. His origin was Tartar, but his family had adopted the Orthodox religion so that he was entirely Russian in his point of view, though not so in his delightfully sensitive character. He was a genuine patriot, and I have no doubt that the tragic sequence of events

through which Russia passed, culminating in the Bolshevik victory and the repudiation of her erstwhile allies at the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, was entirely responsible for his death.

Kazi-Garae believed that if the Allies, especially America, which was apparently the most generally popular, could counterbalance the extraordinarily well-organized German propaganda by an immense outlay of money spent largely in the subsidizing of such of the Press as was friendly to our cause, and the establishment of pro-Ally agencies for the distribution of information, there was still hope.

I am sure the scheme would have failed had it been attempted. The Chan-Chung centre was but one of many carrying out highly effective work. The will of the vast majority of the Russians was not with the war—not only were the soldiers exhausted, disgusted with their officers, overcome by their miseries, but even most of the officers, talk to the contrary as they might, longed for the flesh-pots of Egypt, and had not the spirit left to hearten those whose understanding of the grim situation facing their country was slight indeed. Yet the officers still received a great deal of public laudation.

I recall one typical incident. It was a bitter day in November, the wind blew the finely-powdered snow with the dust and microbes of Harbin into one's eyes and ears. Down one of the broad streets leading to a large octagonal church, extraordinary in design, came through the dismal atmosphere a funeral procession. The crowds of weeping mourners, the priests in white

robes, the acolytes bearing lights and banners, the carts from which greens and flowers were strewn before the hearse—all were most solemnifying. Even more so was the silence and great respect paid to the departed by the crowds which thronged the wayside. With the mourners I passed on slowly to the church, where every conceivable ceremony, with all the mysticism so characteristic of the Russian religion, did honor to the dead. Surely this depth of feeling must indicate that a great man had passed away! At least, so I vainly thought. Lead by curiosity, I asked whose funeral it was. "Have you not heard the sad story?" my informant said, "Colonel \_\_\_\_\_ committed suicide in a fit of grief when his mistress forsook him. What else could he do?"

## CHAPTER V.

### THE CZECHO-SLOVAK CAMPAIGN IN THE FAR EAST.

Arriving at Vladivostok on the 2nd of July, 1918, we were greeted at the wharf with the gladsome news that the city had been captured from the Bolsheviks two days before by the Czecho-Slovaks. The intelligence was not so joyously received by about twenty cut-throats who had travelled with us on the Japanese steamer from Tsuruga, and who, with numerous banners, had held a vehement Bolshevik demonstration on the deck about an hour before, as we left the swell of the ocean behind and entered the heads. It was with genuine satisfaction that we saw them being marched off to prison almost as soon as the steamer docked.

The growth of the Czecho-Slovak movement in Russia forms one of the most romantic phases of the Great War. When the Western Allies marvelled at the great number of prisoners falling to Brusiloff, they little knew that they were mainly Czechs, who by a concentrated and pre-arranged movement, surrendered by battalions and divisions, losing thousands of their numbers in the effort from the guns of both sides, in order to aid the defeat of the Central Powers. Under the old régime they received no recognition, but partly, I fancy, as a matter of political expediency they were given a chance to fight against those who were still masters of their country once Kerensky came into power. It was the Czechs

whom that orator inspired in the so-called Russian offensive of July, 1917, and again the prisoners taken in very large numbers, as compared with the western front, were mainly Czechs.

From this date as long as any attempt was made by the revolutionary government to hold the line the burden of the defence mainly fell upon the erstwhile enemy soldiers. There were few officers among them, and none of senior grade. The latter were at first entirely Russian who found excellent material among the Czechoslovak rank and file to fill the numerous junior commissions required. What a magnificent opportunity for a capable Russian general to command such men! Intelligent, magnificently disciplined, inspired by the lofty motive of freeing their country, they formed a striking change from his own compatriots!

When the Bolsheviks came into power with the knowledge that peace with the enemy was imminent, the Czechs found themselves in an awkward position. However, largely on account of several rather disgraceful happenings behind the old front, which had not shewn the Russian antagonists of the Bolsheviks, especially the officers, in a happy light, their relationship with the Bolsheviks was not at the time uncordial. An arrangement was made by which the Czechs were to be supplied with rolling stock to move them to Vladivostok, and to be allowed to take their arms and equipment with them. From Vladivostok it was hoped that they would in time join

their especially beloved among the Allies, the French, on the Western Front.

Thus began that remarkable journey by nearly 100,000 warriors, filled with trials, tribulations, and valiant heroic exploits, beside which that described in the *Odyssey* pales almost to colorlessness. The vanguard of the Czechs, under General Deidrichs, had reached Vladivostok to the number of 15,000 when events occurred at Irkutsk which changed the whole course of what otherwise would have been a peaceful journey. The original number of the remaining 85,000 had dwindled somewhat, but approximately 50,000 thereof had assembled at Irkutsk when they were held up, so it was stated, by lack of rolling stock to carry them eastward. In this position they were approached by the Bolshevik leaders of the city with the request that they hand over their arms to them, for the apparently laudable object of fighting the Germans, who were disregarding the provisions of the treaty of Brest-Litovsk. At first the Czechs were not deceived, but after much persuasive explanation, they complied, on the Bolsheviks giving them their word of honor that they would expedite the warriors' movement eastward. Immediately the arms were surrendered, the Czechs were imprisoned in concentration camps in and around the city. Unknown to their captors, however, many bombs had been retained which were shortly used by some particularly venturesome spirits to great advantage. The Bolshevik guards fled, leaving their arms behind them.

From this small beginning the advance of the

victors grew like a snowball. Soon the whole city of Irkutsk was in their hands, and all of the railway line as far westwards as the Urals, along which some of their belated comrades were still travelling. Meanwhile the Bolsheviks were not inactive, and word reached the Czechs that their troops were moving westward from Verkhniyondensk to blow up the tunnels to the south of Lake Baikal. Undismayed by this intelligence, which if successful, would have stopped further progress, a section of the Czechs dragged some light guns captured in Irkutsk, across the mountain passes, and surprising the Bolsheviks, largely reinforced by enemy prisoners-of-war, attacked them in the rear. The Bolsheviks capitulated and much more war material fell into the victors' hands. From this time onward the advance of the Czechs eastward, under the gallant leadership of General Gaida, one of their own nationals, was relatively easy. The Bolshevik soldiers for the most part fled as they approached and by the simple process of donning peasant clothes lost their military identity. There was some fighting, the Bolsheviks using to the full, German prisoners-of-war to bolster up their courage, but these efforts were quite unsuccessful.

The vanguard of the Czecho-Slovaks in Vladivostok was at first well treated by the Bolsheviks controlling the city, whose relationship with the guests in their midst was most cordial. The officers were welcomed among the better-off families, the smart-looking soldiers popular among the girls of the town. All in fact, went well until news reached the city of the hold-up of the main

body in Irkutsk. Then General Deidrichs decided that for strategic reasons the capture of Vladivostok was a military necessity, in order that a base might be secured, from which an advance might be made along the Chinese Eastern Railway to the relief of the Czechs at Irkutsk.

It was felt that the Allied warships in the harbor, which had arrived during the winter and summer, with the object of preserving order in the city and protecting the large quantities of Allied stores, might be relied upon to hold the approach to the city by sea, and should necessity arise for assistance in other directions as well. There were three Japanese cruisers in the harbor, one Chinese, one British, one American, and a small French gunboat. The intervention of the Allies in Siberia had not at the moment eventuated, but their representatives were informed of General Deidrichs' plans, and the British and Japanese had protective landing parties ashore on the day when the excitement took place. The morning of the 29th of June was chosen for the occupation of the city. The Bolsheviks were taken entirely unawares, and resistance was encountered only in the fortress staff headquarters, opposite the British Consulate and the Terminal railway station of the Trans-Siberian, where some of the more prominent Bolsheviks and a number of former prisoners-of-war had taken refuge. The opposition here was perhaps greater than had been anticipated, and the place was not captured till six o'clock in the evening. The besieged within the headquarters replied vigorously to the volleys of the Czechs, who riddled the

building with their bullets and flung bombs through the windows. Some of the Bolsheviks and their associates were taken prisoners, but the great majority managed to escape. The Czech casualties were four killed and ten wounded, while their opponents had sixty-nine killed and wounded. The leaders of the Bolsheviks in the city, including my old associate, Fortunatoff, were imprisoned, though the majority of them were speedily released.

Vladivostok in his possession, General Deidrichs at once made plans to obtain control of the railway line northward. There was desultory fighting in the succeeding few days in the country immediately northward of Vladivostok, but serious resistance was not encountered till Nikolsk-Ussuriski was reached. Here, at the junction of the Chinese Eastern Railway and the Blagovestchensk-Habarovsk line, the Bolsheviks, reinforced by relatively large additions of enemy prisoners, made a determined stand. Heavy fighting, producing serious casualties on the slim reserves of the Czechs, continued for some days, the line advanced and retreated, their wounded were brutally maltreated by the Bolsheviks, and the position in Vladivostok looked serious. On the 5th of July, by dint of immense perseverance in the face of very considerable odds, resistance was overcome and the Bolsheviks retreated northward along the line towards Habarovsk. Here it was necessary to pursue them before proceeding westward along the Chinese Eastern Railway, in order to leave a small force at a suitable point to protect the Czech rear.

At this time there were two forces of anti-Bolshevik Russian troops in the Far East, that of Semenoff and that of Kalmikoff. Semenoff's force was largely made up of the Trans-Baikalian Cossacks, to whom he belonged, but with a considerable sprinkling of officers who had seen general service in various non-Cossack units in the old army. Kalmikoff's men were drawn from the Ussuri Cossacks, of which he was *Ataman*, who inhabited the country in the immediate neighborhood of Nikolsk-Ussuriski. At the time of the capture of Vladivostok by the Czechs, Semenoff was in the vicinity of Manchuria Station, close to the Manchurian-Siberian frontier. Kalmikoff had taken refuge, with his small force, in the woods which surrounded the Cossack villages.

Semenoff was apparently willing to work in conjunction with Deidrichs, though little assistance could be expected of him, until the Czechs had settled their difficulties near Vladivostok and started westward. Kalmikoff's forces were small and had the reputation of not being especially reliable. Assistance to the Czechs in the east was, however, a matter of the greatest possible urgency. From the strong resistance encountered at Nikolsk-Ussuriski and from reliable information which had been received that the Bolsheviks were concentrating still stronger forces to the north, it was obvious that not only was it impossible for Deidrichs and his small force to continue their progress westward to the relief of the main body, but it was extremely doubtful as to whether they would be able to hold their new positions

taken up along the Ussuri River to the northward.

These were, in fact, anxious days in Vladivostok. The great majority of the population of the city was still strongly Bolshevik in sympathy and even many of those who were not, resented what they considered the arrogant attitude of the Czechs. Enormous processions of Red mourners accompanied the funeral of the Bolshevik victims of the Czech attack on the Staff Headquarters; violent meetings attended by huge crowds were being constantly held; the new local provisional government founded after the overthrow of the Bolsheviks, and described in a later chapter, was exceedingly weak, and practically devoid of military backing; trains laden with Czech wounded—a horrible evidence of the depleting forces—continued to arrive. Allied intervention with men and munitions was a burning necessity, if for no other reason than to assist their Czech allies.

The Japanese were much the most able to render assistance, especially by bringing forces from Korea to clear the railway line from Manchuria Station to Irkutsk. However, there were obvious political objections in this connection, having regard to the old enmity between the Russians and the Japanese, unless other allied troops were included. At last our fears were relieved by the receipt of news that the 25th Battalion, Middlesex, stationed at Hong-Kong, would be dispatched at once; another British battalion would follow; French troops from Saigon were to come; Italians from Tien-Tsin; Japanese soldiers in considerable numbers were

assured; Americans were promised to guard lines of communication, protect supplies, etc., and Canadians, under what later turned out to be generally similar stipulations.

The Middlesex Battalion, under the command of Colonel John Ward, the first allied troops to appear, arrived at Vladivostok early in August, and shortly afterwards were dispatched to the Ussuri front. Remembering the wonderful welcome which the Canadian Black Watch Battalion, to which I belonged, received at the French seaport where we landed, and at every other town we passed through on our journey to the front, the reception of the Middlesex at Vladivostok was gloomy indeed. A small guard of honor, supplied by Colonel Tolstoff, the officer in charge of the few troops of the local provisional government, made a very presentable appearance at the wharf, but this was almost the only visible evidence of welcome which those, whom we regarded as supplementary to the Czechs in the light of liberators, were to receive.

The troops marched well and accompanied by military and naval bands, made a fine shewing. There were considerable crowds in the lower part of the Svetlanskaya, along which our troops passed, but no enthusiasm whatever on the part of the Russians was displayed. In the less frequented parts of this main thoroughfare, the loungers along the streets seemed less interested in the Englishmen than in one of the many Bolshevik processions, which were such a common occurrence. The reception at Nikolsk-Ussuriski was somewhat more cheering, but it was not until

we had arrived at the front among the Czechs that real evidence of appreciation was forthcoming.

The point chosen for the Middlesex Battalion's base was at Efgenefka, about one hundred miles north of Nikolsk-Ussuriski, and some twenty miles behind the Czech front line positions at the time. Here there were excellent barracks, situated in a pleasant part of the country.

The formal reception of the battalion, however, did not take place at Efgenefka, but at Svyagena, which was only about eight miles behind the lines, and on account of the moral effect that such a demonstration would produce upon the wearied Czechs, the battalion had first of all been taken to Kraefski, three miles behind the lines, to which the Czechs had been obliged to retreat after a repulse at Shmakofka, some ten miles north of Kraefski. The welcome by the Czechs was most inspiring. It was a perfect summer day, and the site chosen wonderfully beautiful—a flowery plain on the edge of a quiet village of white houses. Near at hand the peasants were garnering the harvest, apparently quite uninterested as to whether Bolshevik or Czar ruled in Petrograd, or elsewhere, and oblivious of the fighting proceeding or about to proceed so close to their homes. Sheep and cattle rested in the shade of copses and spreading trees. Beyond, to the east and west, rose high forested hills, clearly defined against the brilliant Siberian sky. On one side a Czech battalion was drawn up, the men, magnificent in physique, superbly disciplined. At right angles stood a company of Cossacks,

bizarre in costume of blue and yellow, with great caps of astrakan, and with numerous yellow pennants floating in the breeze. The peasants from far and near, squatted on low hillocks, or whatever other eminence they could find on the remaining side of the square. To the irresistibly stirring music of a Czech band, the Middlesex swung into view in column of route, and then marching round the square, they drew up in mass facing the Czechs. "God save the King"—the music, it must be confessed, was not as perfect as the Czech airs had been—was then played, all three units standing rigidly to attention. An eloquent address of welcome to the Middlesex from the Russian officer commanding the Czechs followed, to which Colonel Ward responded. His speech—thrilling in its patriotic enthusiasm, splendid in its message of hope, rings through my ears as I write. How different the sad sequence of events might have been if only the Allies had been able to render effective aid to those splendid Czechs and those self-effacing Russians who longed to bring real liberty to their unhappy country, struggling in an iron grip of a tyranny more damnable than that of the czar's! The effect was electric, cheer after cheer resounding through the still, quiet air; even the peasants awoke from their lethargy!

The next day but one, I accompanied Colonel Ward to the line. How unlike that with which I had been familiar in France! The reserve troops were kept at the station of Kraefski, from which an armored train, consisting of an engine and van mounted with a light field gun and

several machine guns, operated along the railway to the northward. The actual front line positions crossed the railway track about four miles north of Kraefski, but the armored train occasionally sallied beyond this point to exchange shots at a distance of five miles or so with its Bolshevik opponent, the manoeuvres of which were extremely amusing to watch through a telescope, as their shooting, fortunately, was poor. Westward of the railway track the country to the shores of Lake Hanka is swampy, so that only a few scattered outposts were considered necessary to hold the ground.

The railway track itself, relatively speaking, was well held by three lines of trenches, each with machine guns. Eastward of the railway there is again swampy ground for a half mile or so. Beyond, two lines of regulation trenches curved south-easterly across the plain to the Cossack positions in a number of small settlements lying close to the base of the hills. At varying distances, within a mile or two back of the front and support trenches there were strong points in the hills with a light gun or two, machine guns and lookout stations, commanding the Bolshevik positions in and around Shmakofka, on relatively high ground five or six miles across the low country to the north from the Czech front line. The Czech positions were well hidden by growing bush or camouflaged by cut boughs, etc., but, speaking in terms of the Western front, extraordinarily weakly held—not so much in regard to men, but more particularly as far as guns were concerned. The few small pieces—

three mountain guns—were old, worn-out, short in range, and generally ineffective. Fortunately the Bolsheviks, in this respect, did not seem to be much better off than the Czechs, but there was the certainty in our minds that before long they would be reinforced by guns from Habarovsk or elsewhere. Somewhat later, help, as far as the Czechs were concerned, came from H.M.S., "Suffolk," and from the Japanese.

It was an extraordinary adventure to be able to ride in broad daylight along the front line and to chat in the open with its defenders. What a change from the long treks, through mud-filled trenches to the lines at Ypres, the Somme, or elsewhere in France! It was, in fact, difficult with scarcely a shot disturbing the still air, and with the peasants working away in the quite undevastated fields, through which we passed on the way up, to realize that this was, indeed, an outpost of the Great War, and that a few miles away Germans and Austrians and Turks were being mustered in relatively large numbers to assist those whom delusion had made our enemies.

The trenches were simple affairs compared with those I had known in France, but were all that conditions required. The Czechs were mainly having their daily sleep as we passed along the lines, but awoke with joy written on their faces to give a cordial welcome. At the principal strong point a bigger reception awaited Colonel Ward; the men were drawn up, cheers were given, and national airs were sung. How wonderful these Czech soldiers were, so splendid to look upon, so cheery, so filled with élan, so

smart, notwithstanding all they had come through! What a contrast a battalion of these trim erect soldiers, marching in perfect unison to one of their own bands, or one of their national airs sung without music, formed behind the lines, to the slovenly bands of Cossack soldiers one occasionally encountered! Yet there was a wild picturesqueness, a devil-may-care appearance, about these rough fellows which was attractive, too.

On our way back to Kraefski, to which we travelled more cautiously in the shelter of the bush, as the Bolsheviks were apparently waking up, we were joined by Kalmikoff and some of his trusted lieutenants. Kalmikoff is or was—because I don't know whether such a devil is still allowed to live—a little man, about five feet two inches in height, with a trim lady-like waist, small and delicate hands, and a face even more boyish than his twenty-five or twenty-six years would suggest. Clad in Cossack shirt, bright-colored trousers, and high fur cap, with sword attached to his gaily ornamented belt, he looked a striking and interesting figure, contrasting strangely with his huge, burly comrades. His manners were so courtly as to be almost elegant, so much so that in recalling him to memory at a somewhat later date, it seemed impossible to associate so apparently gentle a creature with the bloodthirsty excesses he committed. It was Kalmikoff, it is reported, who a few weeks later in Habarovsk, when the Bolsheviks had evacuated the city, became dissatisfied with the music of the band playing in one of the squares of the

city. "That music is awful," he said to an aide-de-camp, "I order these players to be shot." A few minutes later the shots of the firing party rang out and the unfortunate musicians lay huddled at the foot of a wall.

At the front General Deidrichs joined us from Vladivostok, where he had been on one of those frequent visits so necessary at this time to urge the cause of the Czechs before the allied representatives. It was delightful to see him among his men; he was as much one of them as the simplest soldier. Wherever he went in the trenches his cheery words carried a message of inspiration; yet it was the fact that without any complaint he shared with his soldiers all the trials and dangers of the campaign, sleeping in the trenches, or in the forefront of the battle, which especially endeared him.

General Deidrichs is a man of medium build, strong and wiry, with keen clear-cut features, and a swarthy face, hardened and sun-burned from much exposure. His life in Vladivostok was of the simplest character, he and his wife occupying a single room in a miserable hotel. His whole time was given to his work; one of the keenest, most genuine and sincere Russian soldiers of high rank who emerged from the Great War—the great hero of the Siberian Campaign. His quiet manner, his fixity of purpose, his persuasive voice, his clear enunciation of facts, never failed to win him the respect of his hearers.

The Middlesex Battalion, after a few days at Efgenefka, joined the Czechs in the trenches. There, a company of French troops was shortly

added to the defenders, and several battalions of Japanese. Soon an offensive, mainly by the Japanese, was carried out, and the clearing of the line northward to Habarovsk began. The Bolsheviks, in great part, melted into the farms and villages, leaving their German, Austrian and Turkish mercenaries behind to be taken prisoners. Many of the Cossacks from the settlements within the former Bolshevik lines joined Kalmikoff, who had a following of two or three thousand of his countrymen when he entered Habarovsk after the city had been taken by the Japanese. In a short time, opposition to the Czechs and their allies had ceased in the whole Valley of the Amur. Meanwhile, the main body of the Czechs had continued their victorious journey eastward from Lake Baikal, and General Gaida had arrived in Vladivostok. The whole of the country as far west as the Urals was, by the end of August, in the hands of the Czechs.

## CHAPTER VI.

### POLITICS IN EASTERN SIBERIA IN 1918.

The All-Siberian Congress, elected under the unofficial supervision of the Soviets, which met at Tomsk, in October, 1917, arranged for the summoning of an All-Siberian constitutional assembly on the understanding that the privileged classes should be prohibited from taking part in the elections, a decision which was accepted in spite of strong protest even from persons of markedly radical views, but apparently possessing a broad outlook. About two hundred and forty-five delegates were to have been elected, but mainly on account of opposition in many localities towards the participation of any but extreme Socialists in the assembly, only about seventy actually arrived at Tomsk in January, 1918. Even a considerable number of these refused to participate in the deliberations because of the Bolshevik orientation of the remainder.

Nevertheless, the small assembly started work and a decision was reached to make Siberia autonomous. Seventeen ministers were appointed but neither they nor the balance of the members were permitted to act, as on the very first day of the session the assembly was forcibly dissolved by the Bolsheviks, acting presumably under orders from Petrograd. Some of the members of the assembly were arrested, but the majority escaped to various parts of the country, chiefly in the direction of Vladivostok.

Largely on account of foreign influence, Bolshevism was at no time able so completely to

subjugate enterprise, or stifle individual effort at Vladivostok, as at other Siberian cities, yet its powerful influence grew steadily even here. After the ejection of the town council, which had for many months been under the influence of the Mayor, Agaroff, a member of the Menshevik party, more drastic measures than had hitherto been possible, began. Despite the presence of Allied warships in the harbor, persecution of political non-sympathizers became widespread; some flagrant crimes were committed; many of the strongly anti-Bolshevik sections of the population took refuge in flight.

A few members of the Tomsk assembly, and even some of the ministers then appointed, were in Vladivostok when the Czecho-Slovaks assumed control of the town after the overthrow of the Bolsheviks on the 29th of June, and they at once declared themselves as belonging to a properly elected body, and the provisional government of Siberia. This organization was immediately recognized by a somewhat unrepresentative meeting of the town council, by the executives of the various socialist parties, by the council of the Zemstvo and by the representatives of the Siberian Co-operative Association. Naturally, the Bolsheviks were opposed to it, and the cadets and monarchists withheld their support on the grounds that the government originated from an illegally elected assembly, in which the privileged classes had not been permitted to participate.

The new government hastened to proclaim a new flag, green and white in color, which was hoisted above the provisional government buildings, together with the old Russian red, white,

and blue flag and the red flag, as evidence of the revolution now in progress. Early encouragement was given to the formation of a new army. As the government was devoid of funds and had not been recognized by any of the Allies, the organization of the unit fell to the Zemstvo, which had been a recognized institution, not only under the Kerensky government, but under the old régime. The Bolsheviks had pursued the officers of the army and navy so relentlessly that nearly all of any experience had fled to Japan, to Harbin, or to join the *Ataman* Semenov on the Manchurian front. There was thus some difficulty in obtaining a suitable man to command the new unit, but after some consideration, Colonel Tolstoff was chosen with Colonel Bourlin as his Chief of Staff.

Under the Bolshevik rule the warmest champion of the unfortunate officers was a certain charming Russian lady, of good family and education, who, through her bright wit and good looks, managed for a long time to elude suspicion. Soldiers whose anti-Bolshevik sympathies were undoubted found refuge in her home, which was at times filled to overflowing with the hunted. So many did she enable to escape imprisonment, torture, and even death, by getting them safely, by means she had devised, across the frontier into China or Korea or stowed away on boats to Japan, that she came to be known as the "Scarlet Pimpernel." At last she was unconsciously betrayed by a friend. The latter was the wife of an officer who, by feigning Bolshevism, for a time remained immune from danger. To him came a sergeant-major who had served under his com-

mand in former days, asking if he could suggest any means by which Semenoff's army could be joined with safety. Assured of his loyalty, the officer confided in the sergeant-major that his wife had a friend to whom she would send him, and who would assure his escape. The introduction was duly arranged and plans had been made for the sergeant-major's departure when, by a fortunate chance, the officer, returning home late at night, espied the new recruit talking earnestly with a number of the Bolshevik leaders. The "Scarlet Pimpernel" was immediately warned and when her maid rose in the morning to answer the summons of Bolshevik soldiers hammering at the door, she found that her mistress had gone. The latter had departed in the night, and had sought refuge in one of the Allied Consulates entering by a back stairway so that not even the sailors on guard at the main entrance knew of her arrival. The Bolsheviks finding that the bird had flown from her home, and suspecting that she might be at the Consulate, demanded the right of search, but she was skilfully hidden, and the quest was fruitless. Their suspicions, however, were not allayed, and their guards kept watch outside. After some seven or eight days in hiding the venturesome lady got away at night disguised in male-clothes with a British sailor who took her on board the British warship in the harbor. Thence she was escorted to a Japanese cruiser on the point of leaving for Japan, where she remained till the Czechs had taken possession of Vladivostok.

While the Bolsheviks had held Vladivostok in their control during the winter and spring, they

had not been so successful at Harbin. There they had, in fact, been badly beaten by Chinese troops, and the city under the control of the Russian-owned Chinese Eastern Railway—in other words, General Horvat—had become the rallying point for anti-Bolshevik elements. During Semenoff's short period of success against the Bolsheviks in the early part of 1918, influential Russians in Pekin and Harbin had decided to endeavor to unite all detachments fighting against the Bolsheviks—those of Semenoff, Kalmikoff, and a variety of other minor leaders—under an officer who could command general respect. For this purpose Admiral Koltchak, who had formerly been in command of the Black Sea Fleet and an officer of wide experience and capability, had been chosen. Unfortunately, when this decision was taken, Semenoff, who had up to this time borne the brunt of the fighting against the Bolsheviks, was not consulted, and on Koltchak's arrival the former refused to recognize him. Matters naturally grew worse in the fetid atmosphere of intrigue, which had developed at Harbin with the arrival of so many senior officers, most of whom wished to lead, and not to be commanded.

The tension was still further increased by an unfortunate collision between Horvat and Koltchak, and between the latter and a prominent military representative of Japan, generally supposed to be supplying funds for Semenoff. These various dissensions in an organization, for which Horvat was largely responsible, had the effect of discrediting him in public opinion, and it was, consequently, not with that enthusiasm, which might otherwise have been the case, that

news was received in Vladivostock on the 10th of July, or about ten days after the overthrow of the Bolsheviks, that Horvat had declared himself temporary ruler of all Russia. In his initial proclamation he promised:

1. The abolishment of all decrees issued by the Bolsheviks.
2. The re-establishment of law courts and administrative institutions, town and Zemstvo governments.
3. The equality of all citizens under the law and guardianship of individual rights.
4. Universal suffrage.
5. The re-establishment in full of all treaties with allied and neutral powers, including all obligations, political, as well as economic.
6. The re-establishment of the army on principles of firm discipline and no political interference.
7. The re-establishment of the right of ownership.
8. The Agrarian question to await decision by the Constitutional Assembly.
9. The re-establishment of industry and means of communication. The socialization, nationalization, and anarcho-syndicalism of enterprises to be abolished, while giving satisfaction to the fair demands of labor.
10. Improvement in the standard of education.
11. Freedom of all religious creeds.

12. The recognition of the right of Siberia and other separate provinces for autonomy, but under conditions preserving the unity of Russia.

Horvat's envoy, who arrived in Vladivostok almost immediately after the issuing of this proclamation in Harbin, did not receive that cordial reception which his leader had expected. Horvat's loss of prestige during the preceding winter tended to increase the suspicion in which he was held by the relatively moderate socialists who comprised the Vladivostok provisional government. The Bolsheviks looked upon him as their arch-enemy. The Allied representatives, while they might have welcomed his intervention some months earlier, considered his entry at this moment inopportune, and likely to hinder the Czech movements. The Cadet party favored him, as did those of the less extreme socialists, who saw that strength would be added to the provisional government if the experience of Horvat and certain of his followers could be added thereto. Horvat, meanwhile, had arrived at Grodekova, a small settlement near Pogranecnaya, with a small army of about 3,000, including 500 particularly unsavory Chinese mercenaries, and a great number of highly reactionary generals and lesser officers.

While the various political events just described were crowding upon us in quick succession, and while battles between the Czechs and their allies on one hand, and the Bolsheviks on the other, raged within a few miles of the city, there was a regular flood of refugees to Vladivostok, who had taken shelter from the Bolshevik terror in

Japan and China. Further, the city assumed the atmosphere of a capital, with diplomatic representatives in its midst from all the principal allied nations. The refugees were very different in character from those whom I had remembered in the days when Fortunatoff and I had examined the incomers in the early days of the revolution. For the most part, they were returned officers of the army and navy, merchants, or persons belonging to aristocratic families seeking for information about their relatives or for an opening to help their country in its distress.

The Bolsheviks no longer basked in the open; some of the leaders had fled and others were hidden in and around the city in the hope of renewing their programme when propitious times should return. Fortunatoff was among those arrested and imprisoned by the Czechs at the time of the capture of the city. He was freed, however, a few days after, and took an early occasion to telephone me to ask if he might not come to see me on a certain day. It happened that I was expecting some prominent Czechs to call about five o'clock on the day he mentioned, but thinking they would not stop more than an hour, I suggested Fortunatoff should come at six o'clock. Unfortunately, the Czechs came half an hour late, the Bolshevik leader half an hour early, and they met in our little reception room. They were as cordial to each other as if they had been bosom friends fighting on the same side, rather than the hunted political criminal and his judge of a few days before. No one unfamiliar with the facts would have dreamed that one had but

recently been imprisoned and almost executed by the other.

One of the most interesting personalities in Vladivostok at this time was the singer, Karen-skaya, who had been famous in the opera at Petrograd and Moscow. I met this large lady at a luncheon on the flagship of Admiral Kato, when she delighted us all by her songs. Her voice had a wide range from high soprano to deep contralto, and though I fancy her singing lacked finesse, the effect produced by its strength and richness was stirring and delightful, while her breezy nature was most refreshing. She gave us a short political speech afterwards and I remember being particularly impressed by her enthusiastic statement, as she described the work of the Russian army, to the effect that she loved but one man, her husband, who was, I believe, a colonel. This seemed so delightfully unusual for a Russian woman, especially one who had passed her life upon the stage.

She asked me to call, which I did a few days later. She received me cordially in her one and only apartment. Although it was late in the afternoon she had just risen to give up her bed to her son so that he might have his turn at sleep. The visit was most friendly and on my departure she accepted an invitation to dine at our flat a few nights afterwards with myself and a number of other officers. The hour set for the meal was eight o'clock, but it was no surprise, either to us or our excellent Chinese cook, that she did not appear till nine. Then, hearing a heated altercation with an *eesvostchik* proceeding below on the Puskinskaya, from which a long flight

of stone steps led to our flat, we dispatched a search party who, with difficulty, managed to guide our ample guest up the narrow passage. She arrived puffing, but in great form, and as she dived from one dish of the *zakouska* to the other, gulping down huge quantities of vodka meanwhile, with an avidity which was as amazing as it was gratifying, managed to squeeze in a wonderful patriotic song through which ran the refrain of the Marseillaise. To the next courses she was no less appreciative; fish, game, and sweets disappeared in vast helpings to the accompaniment of various wines, and every now and then one of her wonderful songs fairly rocked the building or was so soft and sweet that its vibrations died away within the little room. Her stories were no less enlivening; it was a wonderful music-hall performance all to ourselves.

Dinner over, about eleven o'clock she called for tea, with which honey and jam must be served. I forget how many glasses were tucked away with numerous sweet cakes, but still her wonderful good humor, her songs, her stories, continued. About twelve o'clock she suddenly became serious and turning to me, said, "Do you know the reason why I like you?—you are a Scotsman and the first man I loved was a Scotsman." "Ah!" I said, "I did not know you had ever loved any man but your husband; you told us so on the Japanese cruiser." She fairly rocked with laughter. "I never love more than one at a time; I have loved very many since the Scot." Then she said, "I wonder if one of you will carry out an important commission for me to-night." We all volunteered to be of service, but the lady's choice

fell on the youngest of our party. His instructions were to take a tiny packet, which she produced from a bag at her waist, to a man who would be found chatting with a woman in a certain room opening from a passage leading from the back stairs of the *Zolotoi Rog* theatre. On no account was he to deliver the packet till the woman had departed; he was to outstay her, and when the commission was fulfilled, he was to telephone Karenskaya that all was well. Meanwhile, she would remain with us.

We filled in the interval with more songs, more tea, honey and cake; more sweet wine, so the hour and a half which elapsed while we waited passed merrily enough. When the telephone bell rang, Karenskaya rushed to answer it. We could tell from her conversation that the woman with the man had not left. "Stay on till she goes," were the singer's instructions. Back she came, still in great spirits, our concert went on, reached a pitch not yet earlier attained, in fact. Two o'clock came, the telephone jingled again. All was well, the woman had gone, the mysterious document delivered. A few minutes later, our guest, in even better form than she had been all evening, took her departure, after singing a farewell song, which seemed to us to be a sort of pæan of success and victory. One of the officers escorted her home. They passed on the way one of the little shops on the Svetlanskaya, open all night; "I must have some food," she said. So here she stopped to buy a supply of sausages for an early morning repast!

We never found out what the document contained, but it was certainly of a political nature,

and we have our suspicions that it was not unconnected with the coup of Admiral Koltchak in Omsk a few months later. Karenskaya was intensely popular with the soldiers and workmen; her original and attractive personality gave her an appreciative audience wherever she went; it was easy for her to get information.

These were days when there was much social entertaining in Vladivostok. We became accustomed to our Russian guests arriving late for meals; it was less easy arranging, at a second's notice, for unexpected additional guests whom those invited brought with them. These little episodes affected us more than our Chinese cook, while our Russian sailor servant took all as a matter of course. I recall with amusement the absolute unconcern of the latter when he brought in my hot water for shaving one morning, remarking, "Get up, here is your shaving water, Sir Major. The lady who was sleeping here last night left her hat in the reception room. Where shall I take it?" There was no hesitancy, apparently nothing unusual to him in the statement. I hasten to add that a Russian officer and his wife had dined with us the night before. One of those summer deluges, so characteristic of the climate at Vladivostok, had arisen while they were there, and, in departing, the lady had borrowed one of our caps to save her headgear.

A few weeks after Karenskaya had been our guest, her cousin, a beautiful but worthless youth, appealed to me for protection against Skipitroff, a Russian general with rather a notorious reputation at the time in Vladivostok. Both had served under Semenoff on the Manchurian front,

and trouble had begun when Skipitroff had appropriated the young officer's mistress at Harbin. Now Skipitroff was preparing, so the youth said, to dispatch him in a way not unusual in Semenoff's army. We extricated him from his difficulties and got rid of him.

Skipitroff was a thorough scoundrel, with a forceful, though brutal, character—a big, strongly-built man, with a certain evil attractiveness which made him popular with the women who frequented Vladivostok's most infamous music hall, the Aquarium. I had first met him when he called to see me on his arrival in Vladivostok, as an envoy from Semenoff, after the capture of the city by the Czechs. He was then a colonel, but soon after, Semenoff, having declared himself Generalissimo of the Siberian Armies, appointed Skipitroff commander of all the eastern armies, *i.e.*, from Chita eastward, and he assumed the title of General. This, of course, was an amusingly grandiloquent title; the only armies at the time in the east were that of the Bolsheviks and that of the Czechs, with whom were associated Kalmikoff's Cossacks. The few men serving in Vladivostok under Tolstoff did not comprise an ordinary company. As far as I know, no one, except an immediate and unsavory entourage, ever recognized Skipitroff in his imposing position, but he went about endeavoring to mobilize men forcibly in various places, and generally made the task of encouraging the growth of Tolstoff's unit more difficult.

Shortly after his arrival, Skipitroff's already lurid reputation was not improved even in Vladivostok by his gaily pitching another Russian

general from one of the curtained-off boxes in the gallery of the Aquarium to the main hall below—an unusual bouquet for the revellers beneath. The general was merely badly shaken, but the episode remained for a time a subject of unfavorable comment.

During the excitements following the withdrawal of the Koltchak forces from Siberia the following year, when Irkutsk was taken and retaken by either side, Skiptroff was for a time prominent in that locality. It was reported that he was the ringleader in the massacre of a large number of Bolshevik hostages taken aboard a steamer at Irkutsk when the anti-Bolshevik forces were obliged to abandon the city. These hostages, one at a time, were brought stripped naked into the saloon and there told that on signing a certain document to the effect that their treatment had been good they would be allowed free. All signed the document, but as each reached the top of the gangway leading from the saloon his head was smashed in by a hammer and his body flung overboard. This would seem, under ordinary circumstances, to have been a terrific outrage, but in extenuation it may be remembered that it occurred in Siberia among elements whose written or spoken promise was almost invariably valueless, and whose horrible excesses could not fail to arouse a desire for revenge.

Our hopes that a rapprochement between Horvat's government and the provisional government at Vladivostok would take place, and that the best elements in each would unite into a strong administration, in some way representative S.C.—7.

of the original constitutional assembly, did not materialize. The extreme advisers, who hung around either side, precluded such a happy adjustment. Horvat's prestige among the socialists received a distinct blow in his supposed complication in the efforts on the part of reactionary officers to gain control of the local forces, while the after events of these efforts did not improve the feeling which the better elements of the community, many of whom were among Horvat's followers, held for the Allies.

The first of the efforts is associated with the name of General Chreshtchatiski who, while Horvat had his headquarters at Grodekova, decided on his own initiative to move certain of the latter's troops to the Ussuri front, although the Czechs had not asked him to participate in the fighting there. An armored train was dispatched from the station of Golenki towards Nikolsk-Ussuriski, en route, via that junction, to the Ussuri front. After a protest from the Czechs the train was withdrawn, but before it had returned to Golenki, the Czechs, unaware of its object, had thrown bombs in front of it to keep it at a safe distance. In fact, certain of their forces had been drawn up in extended order to impede any sortie which might be made therefrom. A few shots were exchanged before Chreshtchatiski's intentions were made clear. The episode seems to have followed a festive evening in which both sides had participated, so that it is possible the Czechs may not have behaved with their usual sanity. A printed document discovered at the time showed that Chreshtchatiski's

intention had been to make a military mobilization in and around Nikolsk.

The arrival of General Horvat and his entourage in Vladivostok synchronized with the Chreshchatiski affair. In connection with the latter the Allied representatives took quick action. Horvat agreed to dismiss the general, disband the Chinese troops and send his Russian soldiers to the Manchurian front. Meanwhile, he and his followers continued to live in their comfortable trains which were drawn up on a siding about a mile from the Vladivostok station.

A more serious effort on the part of Horvat's followers to gain control of military affairs took definite shape on the 23rd of August, when General Pleshkoff, Horvat's chief of staff, arrived in Vladivostok, synchronously with the publication of his order to the effect that he had assumed the command of all the Russian units in the Far East; and that all officers and men of the "New Army," under Tolstoff, were, consequently, subordinate to him. The "New Army," as it was called, i.e., the troops financed by the Zemstvo, numbering not more than a few hundred and largely composed of officers, had never prospered. Colonel Tolstoff, without adequate financial assistance and no Allied support, had at best a difficult job, and being indecisive in character, it was not remarkable that his success had been slight. On the 19th a meeting had been held in Vladivostok of representatives of all the various small Russian units in the Far East, at which it had been decided that it was eminently desirable that all should be united under a common command, and that this command should

devolve upon the officer senior in rank, who happened to be General Pleshkoff, commanding Horvat's troops. It is doubtful whether Colonel Tolstoff had been fully consulted, but his chief of staff, Colonel Bourlin, and practically all the lesser officers were highly favorable to the arrangement. On the face of it, so unanimous a decision would seem to have made the carrying out of the scheme eminently proper and desirable, but behind the laudable desire of the officers in the "New Army" for union lay the fact that strong influence had been at work on the part of General Horvat's entourage to bring about the union under his commander-in-chief, in the hope of political advantages, and here, indeed, lay the chief "fly in the ointment."

Immediately after the issuing of Pleshkoff's proclamation, which appeared late in the evening, the guards belonging to the "New Army," under Colonel Tolstoff's command, but now under orders from General Pleshkoff, were strengthened both at the Headquarter's Staff Building and at the State Bank. During the early morning Colonel Tolstoff endeavored, with the aid of *militzia* (police) to eject the deserting soldiers from the staff, but without avail, and later in the morning a collision between the *militzia* and the guard at the State Bank was only averted by the timely arrival of an Allied American-Czecho-Slovak patrol and the disarmament of the warring factions.

After these unfortunate episodes, it was clear that only one course of action was open to the Allies, namely: the disarmament of the Pleshkoff forces in Vladivostok. Following the capture of

the city by the Czechs, it had been decided that no armed forces, other than those recognized by the Allies, would be allowed. As the "New Army" had been under the control of the Zemstvo, a recognized institution, its *raison d'être* had been formerly made clear, but since the defection of practically the whole of its personnel, with the exception of its commander, to Pleshkoff, it came under a different category. The decision of the Allies in this connection had been emphasized anew when Chreshtchatiski's forces had been disarmed.

The disarmament, consequently, took place on the evening of Sunday, the 25th. It was a dismal proceeding, and genuine regret was expressed, especially by those directly responsible, that so drastic an action was necessary. Not only was there considerable sympathy with the desire for union which the junior officers had in mind, but it was widely recognized that they were for the most part brave men, who, amid the trials and tribulations through which Russia had passed, were still willing to make an attempt to build up a new armed force, under what could be described as nothing but eminently unsatisfactory conditions.

The affair created an unfavorable impression among all sections of the community, even the Bolsheviks using it as an excuse to agitate against the Allies. They argued that the Allies wished no strength in Russia, having, through the instrumentality of the Czechs, disbanded the Bolshevik forces and now themselves disarmed the "bourgeois" army.

Needless to say, the officers and men directly

concerned burned with indignation, and immediately prepared to depart in high dudgeon for Harbin, whither their leader had already gone. The departure was delayed, fortunately, till the arrival of General Knox, whose deep knowledge of the Russian character it was felt would enable him to smooth the ruffled feelings and mollify an indignity which we all recognized and the results of which were giving us the deepest concern. The affair gave General Knox much trouble, and there were endless and wearying interviews before it was finally decided that the officers and their men must leave, but before going their arms were to be returned. The ceremony was duly carried out amid great pomp and solemnity, and the soldiers left for Grodekova, whence, in course of time, they were absorbed into the units fighting against the Bolsheviks on the Ural front.

In October, Admiral Koltchak arrived in Vladivostok. His presence made little impression, and few of the foreigners in the city dreamed of the prominent part he was soon to take in Siberian politics. He was a man rather under medium height and spare of stature; a pale complexion emphasized the darkness of his hair and his remarkable black eyes. Even apart from his prominent nose, his appearance was more Turkish or Bulgarian than Russian. Though sailorly in bearing, his face was rather more ascetic in type than one usually associates with a life on the sea. His hands were particularly expressive, and moved continually as he spoke. His English was fairly good, but spoken slowly and without intonation. His manner

lacked that cordiality so characteristic of Russians of high position, but there was a simplicity and dignity which was attractive. At my interview with him, generalities only, as far as political matters were concerned, were discussed, but it seemed to me and to a friend who accompanied me, that some deep-laid scheme lay behind that singularly mirthless countenance. He remained in Vladivostok for three or four days only, when he left for Omsk. A few days later the coup d'etat, which made him the supreme ruler, took place.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE MILITARY SCHOOL AT RUSSIAN ISLAND.

It had long been my most cherished ambition to assist in some way in the rehabilitation of the Russian Army, so that when General Knox gave me the opportunity of taking charge of the arrangements for establishing a training school for officers and N.C.O.'s on Russian Island, I grasped the chance with joy and enthusiasm.

The men trained were to form the nucleus round which should develop a well-disciplined force. Their training was to follow the lines pursued in the British military schools, under a system from which it was hoped a real spirit of comradeship in arms would develop between the different ranks. This wholesomely democratic idea, side by side with the strictest discipline, had been highly successful in the British army, no less so among the Czechs. Were we overly sanguine in thinking it might succeed equally well among the Russians and lead to the development of a real new army animated by good fellowship and by those high ideals of patriotism so necessary for Russia in her agony?

The inspiration for the first military school near Vladivostok, came from General Knox, and to him is due the credit for the various other schools of similar nature established during the Koltchak régime in other parts of the country. The site for the school was chosen by General Deidrichs and myself, at a place known as Ekipajni Pree-  
stan, on Russian Island—a beautiful body of mountainous country, about ten miles by five,

which protects the entrance to the harbor of Vladivostok. There had formerly been accommodation for about 30,000 troops on Russian Island, and every sheltered valley was filled with barracks and other military buildings. At Ekipajni Preestan lay one of these establishments situated amid inspiring surroundings about half-way along the southern shore of the long bay which almost divides Russian Island in two. The settlement contained three large buildings for dormitories; another large building for class rooms, relaxation hall and canteen; a large students' dining hall and kitchen; servants' quarters; bathhouse; garage; power station; officers' mess; and, numerous other lesser buildings. Most of the buildings were well constructed of brick and stone, and excellently suited for the purpose designed, but were in an appalling state of repair; the soldiers, after the casting-off of the discipline of the regiment to which the barracks had belonged following the revolution, having taken an especial joy in destruction.

It was originally intended to house the whole school, that is, both for officers and N.C.O.'s, at Ekipajni, but as our ideas grew, it became obvious that the accommodation was insufficient and so Ekipajni was kept for officer students, their training cadre, and the headquarters' staff, both British and Russian, while a new location for the N.C.O.'s school, with their teaching cadre, was chosen at the former barracks and headquarters of the 36th Regiment, about one and one-half miles westerly along the bay from Ekipajni.

Preparations had to be made for the recep-

tion of 500 officer students, 1,000 N.C.O. students, a Russian teaching cadre of about 100 officers, a headquarters of about twenty-five and a British teaching staff of about ten officers and N.C.O.'s. In addition, there were cooks and servants, and during the course of preparation about 300 German, Austrian, and Turkish prisoners-of-war, and as many Russian workmen of various trades, to be considered. Altogether, at the height of our glory we formed a very busy colony of upwards of 2,000 souls. However, our start early in October was very different. Then there was only myself and a junior British officer, Lieut. MacAllister, who had come from Canada with me, two or three British N.C.O.'s and privates, and a small number of war prisoners. We British slept on the floor of one of the dilapidated buildings we had chosen as our headquarters, and ate our meals outside in the brilliant autumn air; the prisoners and their guard were in an adjoining building.

It is impossible to do justice to a description of the state of wreck the buildings were in. Owing to stout walls and good construction the general appearance at first sight had belied the actual state of affairs. There was scarcely a window which had not a broken pane or two and very many were entirely devoid of glass; the rubbish and débris inside the buildings at Ekipajni alone filled more than 300 motor trucks. The chapels had been desecrated and the ikons and holy pictures, ordinarily supposed to be dear to the simple Russian, mutilated or destroyed. The filth everywhere, especially in the latrines, defies description. It was, indeed, so appalling

that one could not associate the buildings with former human habitations. Not a single door had a catch or lock, the power house and bath-house were completely out of order, hardly one of the big stoves, with which all the buildings were well supplied, would burn; many had been torn down. The buildings at the 36th Regiment proved to be in an even worse state than those at Ekipajni, and there we had a political difficulty as well, for a Japanese company had taken up its quarters in certain of the barracks we required; there was the certainty in our minds that Russians and Japanese would not work well side by side. I hasten to add that after some rather long drawn-out explanations the Japanese obligingly departed to another part of the island.

The work of rehabilitation was long and tedious, especially when one remembers that our labor consisted of enemy prisoners-of-war who did not want to work, and of Russian workmen whose sympathies, at any rate, were not with militarism as they understood it. We had promised General Knox that the officers' section of the school would be ready for occupancy by December 1st, and the N.C.O.'s by the 1st of February or a little earlier. Often, as the glazing, painting, whitewashing, stovemending, cleaning, and other features of rehabilitation dragged through inefficient or insufficient workmen, I wondered if we would succeed. Apart from this phase of the work, it was a terrific job collecting supplies, like beds, benches, straw mattresses, dishes, etc., though for this purpose we had *carte blanche* to rob the numerous other barracks

on the island. Our motor trucks were never idle for repairs, and it was a veritable catastrophe when the man in charge of an extra one being sent to our assistance left the radiator filled with water on a night when the temperature was well below zero, with the natural, but disastrous, result. Our progress, in regard to obtaining lesser supplies and the vast quantities of timber we required, was largely due to an indefatigable friend of ours in charge of the Army Service section at Vladivostok, Major Robertson, whose genial nature gave him success in squeezing supplies from sources which others would have found of desert dryness.

As the work progressed, other officers joined us to assist in the work of reconstruction. Captain Stairs took charge of the detail of operations at the 36th Regiment, while Captain Martini, a Pole in origin, was chosen from a variety of Russian officers who were hanging around, to look after the mechanical transport, the renovation of the electric light plant, bath-houses, etc. To the capable assistance of both of these officers our initial success was largely due.

It was General Knox's idea that the administration of the buildings should be turned over to the Russians as soon as all were in readiness to receive the students, and that I and the other British officers and N.C.O.'s at the island, should either be sent to other parts of Siberia where other military schools were contemplated, or remain on Russian Island in the capacity of British instructors, of whom a considerable number were to be attached. The armistice, however, intervened before the work of construction

on Russian Island was completed, and Stairs, MacAllister and myself were allowed to return to Canada without proceeding to new military pastures.

Until the water in the bay at Ekipajni froze about the 1st of December, there was communication twice daily with Vladivostok by a duty boat, which called at various wharves around the island. As far as I know, no one ever paid on this steamer; it was, of course, government-owned, but the way it continued to travel amid the constantly changing régimes was a source of mystery and surprise. The duty boat brought a great deal of our supplies, but, in addition, many barge loads were towed over by small tugs. Our greatest joy was the use of a torpedo boat destroyer, loaned by the Russian Naval Department, which made the trip from Vladivostok to Ekipajni in about an hour. We were fairly well equipped with motor cars and trucks on the island and when the harbor froze, as it did almost in a night, these were used to cross the ice to Pospaylova, on the harbor side of Russian Island, where the American Hospital was situated and whence ice breakers kept the channel free to Vladivostok and the open sea. After communication by this route had been established an ice breaker laden with sick Czechs entered our bay, which it managed to ascend, to a point beyond Ekipajni. This for a time ruined ice travel; one of our motor trucks got through the ice and was extricated with difficulty; and a number of travellers were drowned.

Our prisoners-of-war, on the whole, gave us little trouble. The Germans were far the most

hardworking and reliable, and many were able soon to occupy positions of relative trust, in charge of working parties or other prisoners, or of stores and supplies. One German sergeant major was a capital fellow, a veritable treasure, who helped us a great deal in keeping the others in hand. The Austrians were largely Jews, physically inferior to the Germans, and given to complaint. The Turks were so transparently cunning in their efforts to avoid work that they gave us endless amusement. We were continually discovering that the reason why a Turkish suppliant for boots, or some other article of apparel, had none was because he had sold them to get money for tobacco or some other luxury. At Christmas, when all were given a day's holiday, the Jews discovered strong, religious grounds for a second holiday on Boxing Day, and the Mohammedans gave no less serious reasons why the vacation should not be continued for still another day!

There was a worrying outbreak of sickness among the prisoners when we first went to Russian Island—a sort of grippe—which annoyingly hampered our progress. This we combatted vigorously with Epsom salts and aspirin, our only remedies, and got through the epidemic without a single casualty from either illness or the cure! One old Turk alarmed us for a time. We felt his life hung by a thread—it could only be a matter of hours—but to our great surprise, after we had abandoned him to die quietly in a warm room we used as an hospital, he bucked up and in a few days was much more alive than when he took ill, and, be it added, he was most

pathetically grateful. He told us he was determined not to die in Russia.

The prisoners were nominally looked after by a Russian Cossack guard, about the poorest apology for a unit of its kind I have ever encountered. With their flashy uniforms and wonderful salutes they looked imposing, but we found them open to all sorts of bribery and corruption. The depravity of one of them whom we had for a time considered the best of the five reached a climax when we found him guilty of endeavoring to strangle an Austrian Jew prisoner, who was the possessor of some hundreds of roubles.

The Jew had applied for leave to visit a sick friend in the Czech hospital, across the bay—a not unusual request when it is recalled that both Jew and Czech had formerly been Austrian citizens and came from the same locality. His request was granted on condition that the prisoner was accompanied by one of the guard. On making their way across the ice, the guard suddenly pounced upon his charge, whom he knew to be carrying some money, flung him on his face and started to strangle him. The Jew in making his escape shewed considerable presence of mind. Struggling for breath, with the fingers of the burly Russian tightly closed round his neck and knees pressing into his back, he had managed to blurt out that most of his hoard was at the prison camp and all would be the Cossack's if the latter would spare his life. Stirred by greed, the guard listened to the supplication and both repaired to the prisoners' barracks at the 36th Regiment. Here the Jew handed over the

money and, though threatened with death if he accused the guard, hastened as soon as the scoundrel had gone, to inform Stairs of the affair. The latter did not believe the story and with reason, because this particular Jew had given us more trouble and annoyance than all the other prisoners put together. However, he ordered another member of the guard than the accused to escort him to me at the British residence at Ekipajni. Here the main quarters happened to be filled with guests; so the case was heard in the kitchen, which formed a sort of waiting-room, as well as cooking-place, since the front entrance to the house was kept closed on account of the cold. The Jew's plaintive story, blurted out incoherently amid the greatest excitement, was not likely to receive a fairer hearing from me than from Stairs. However, by a dramatic coincidence, just as he was finishing his yarn, the member of the guard whom he blamed, unaware that the Jew had been paraded before me, or, in fact, that he had left the prison camp, entered the kitchen to pester our quartermaster-sergeant for a change of uniform. He could not escape, so with marvellous *sang-froid* hastened to deny the whole story. He did not look guilty, and, moreover, in any quarrel with the wretched prisoner was assured of my sympathy in advance—a circumstance of which he was well aware. More, therefore, from a sudden inspiration than from any feelings of conviction as to his guilt, I hastened to pummel him with accusations along the lines of the 3rd degree. "You are guilty; you know you are; hand over the money immediately; you must be thrashed,

*galoopchik* (little pigeon); why did you behave so disgracefully?" These and many other similar statements came forth rapidly to the accompaniment of sobs from the Jew and the odor of sucking pig and onions, which the Chinese cook was preparing for our evening meal. Some Russian workmen who had come into the kitchen watched events intently. The innocent member of the guard was silent. The accusations continued: "See," I said, "the marks of your fingers are on his throat"—these were the merest bruises and might have been caused by other means than those alleged. "You are right, *barin* (sir), I did it. I did not think it wrong to ill-treat a prisoner, especially a Jew."

The Russian civilian laborers were psychologically a most interesting study. From October till February we employed, on the average, about 150, and had at times as many as 300—painters and whitewashers, glaziers, tinsmiths and stovemenders, mechanics, and carpenters.

The painters were generally inefficient; it seemed to us that anyone who could not find employment at anything else chose painting as an impromptu profession. Racially they were mainly Jews or Letts and were less attractive than the other tradesmen. Politically they came in time to be considered especially dangerous.

We had for a time a regular army of glaziers, so completely had the glass been smashed in all the buildings during the progress of the soldiers' revolutionary frolics. The tinsmiths had shops at Ekipajni and the 36th Regiment entirely to themselves for mending large numbers of those peculiar washstands which the Russians love—

we did not find a single whole one on the island—for making pails, vats, temporary stoves, and innumerable other like articles. Every stove in the place—all affairs built in the walls of the rooms, of brick and mortar and frequently encased with steel, and there were hundreds of them—had to be rebuilt, and generally new doors, flues, etc., had to be obtained, the originals having been stolen.

The carpenters were my especial interest; we had more of them than of any other trade, because we had more beds, chairs, stoves, cupboards, and shrines to mend than anything else. Destructive as the frolicking revolutionaries may have been, I am sure such an accumulation of broken furniture did not date entirely from them. We collected it from far and near, in motor trucks, and it all had to go to the carpenter hospital. The carpenters were the most typically Russian of our tradesmen and were, at the same time, much the most efficient. We found them more capable craftsmen than the general run of American, Canadian, or English carpenters, and at the same time more hard-working and less grumbling.

Taking them collectively, our workmen gave us extraordinarily little trouble. I have never had a better lot of men. All, with the exception of one or two sent us by the Russian Engineering Department, were collected by Major Robertson, in Vladivostok, without any particular discrimination, and were, I suppose, fairly representative. The Russian officers associated with us described all, with the exception of a few from the Russian Engineers, as Bolsheviks,

and so, I presume, in a sense they were, if the possession of copies of Karl Marx's writings (which none of them understood at all) constituted them so, but how docile, tractable, and reliable, as compared with Canadian or American workmen! Many of them stayed with us from the beginning to the end of our work, and then departed with loud lamentations. They were a jolly lot of fellows; many brought their wives (who slept I don't know where), who cooked, washed, and during the working hours served tea, to which Russians of all classes are equally partial. They never seemed to be idle, and we had only one or two cases of drunkenness, and even these lapses from propriety occurred at the Russian Christmas when some festivity is, perhaps, excusable. Our greatest trouble was in the distribution of the weekly pay. It was impossible to get enough small notes and postage stamps (silver had absolutely disappeared) to pay each one separately, but we generally managed without quarrels and trouble to collect three or four or more together and pay them with one large note.

Our work had apparently the good-will of the local population of the island, judging by the presents we received at Christmas time from all sorts and conditions of people. Among these were a large, live goose (with instructions how it was to be fed), and a tame fawn. The latter was a most attractive creature, at least so we thought on first acquaintance. It would jump on one's lap, beg like a dog, eat up the orange peels which fell on the floor, and look at one with the most fascinating expression in its eyes.

But its other tricks were not so nice. After it had eaten up the pot plants, devoured the Chinese matting on the floor, finished one or two mattresses, and gone to sleep on my bed, we were forced to relegate the engaging animal to the garage.

By the 1st of December, the officers' school was ready to open. Colonel Sakharoff, shortly to become a Major-General, was chosen as Russian Commandant, after a number of other temporary appointees, and the officer students, many of whom had been hanging about for weeks and with the greatest difficulty kept out of the buildings, were paraded into their quarters. General Stepanoff, the Minister of War, visited us about the same time. An untoward episode marked his arrival. So interested were Russian officers and even those of other nations in the experiment in progress on Russian Island, that we had lots of visitors, and the British residence was frequently jammed to overflowing with unexpected guests. Late one night, after I had gone to bed, the Russian torpedo boat, which was at our disposal, arrived with a number of people, whose identity was not disclosed. They were allotted accommodation in the hall on hard, unmattressed plank stretchers, only used as a *dernier ressort*. In the morning, to my regret and surprise, I discovered that among the late arrivals had been General Stepanoff. Instead of making a fuss over the hardness of his bed, he was full of apologies for bothering us without previous notification. Something had gone wrong with the communications to the island, and he had been unable to let us know in advance

of his visit. He made a very thorough inspection of the school, discussed plans, was delighted with everything and departed, leaving the impression of a friendly, well-bred, genial soldier, accustomed to rough life, and anxious to give his whole-hearted assistance in the work we had in hand.

The school, indeed, started well. General Sakharoff was an excellent organizer, his staff was seemingly well chosen. Discipline, at any rate, as far as the outward effect was concerned, seemed good; the spirit between officer instructors, and the students, apparently approximated the ideal for which we strove. General Sakharoff and I made weekly inspections—we were determined that the buildings should be kept clean—and it was remarkable, at first, how spotless and relatively faultless they were. When we entered a dormitory or class room the display, after all the laxity of discipline since the revolution, was truly refreshing. The senior officer present, after bringing all subordinates to attention, with his hand at the salute shouted out *Zhelaiu Zdarie vash prevoshodetelstvo* (I wish you health, your excellency), and then proceeded with great speed to report the state of affairs, after which he was allowed to give his complaints. There were, invariably, many of these, much more trivial, so it seemed to us, than would have been the case with British soldiers. Meanwhile, there was much training out of doors, the students trimly attired in somewhat refashioned British uniforms, swinging along the well-made roads in excellent form, gladdening one's heart after so much disorder.

There was a lack of physical training and sport, but even these phases shewed improvement when a number of capable British training officers arrived at the school; my time and that of those associated with me was entirely absorbed by administrative and reconstructive efforts.

Everything, in fact, progressed satisfactorily till after Christmas, when trouble began to loom in the horizon. Indirectly, we heard of widespread complaint from the students—more from the officer students than from the N.C.O.'s who had by this time begun to arrive. There were signs of laxity among the officer instructors and even more perturbing abundant evidence of a growth of highly reactionary tendencies. Russian civilian workmen were arrested and imprisoned always on the charge of Bolshevism, others fled from the island; the work of construction was, accordingly, impeded. A few episodes may be given by way of explanation.

A peasant, living on the island, who had become well-known to us as the purveyor of hay to fill the mattresses, had let one of the rooms in his cottage to the wife of an officer student, who had no right to be there, as the women of men belonging to the school were forbidden its precincts. When the student and his wife were departing for the Christmas holidays, the former took with him the key of his room. During his absence, the peasant was obliged to force the door in order to get some supplies in the cellar, to which there was communication only through the student's room. The student was furious at this intrusion, complained to General Sakharoff, who had the peasant arrested and

tried by the Adjutant. The latter condemned the unfortunate man to surrender all his goods and leave the island for ever.

This drastic treatment was followed soon after by another occurrence, even more alarming. General Sakharoff and a number of other senior officers of the school happened to be walking by a woodland path leading to the school garage, along poles adjoining which an electric light wire was being strung. A civilian workman up one of these poles failed to come down at their approach.

Ordered to come down and stand firmly to attention, he was asked to explain his outrageous conduct. Did he not know a Russian general when he saw him? The simple fellow was tactless and hastened to explain that he had not noticed the great people approach, and that he was, at any rate, in the employ of the British, who were reconstructing the buildings of the school. His remarks only served to further annoy the general who ordered him to be imprisoned, preparatory to court-martial. Captain Martini, hearing of the incident, brought the news to me. It happened that the arrested man was at the moment an invaluable link in the successful running of our electric lighting plant—a decrepit affair, with old and unreliable machinery which had to be watched with the greatest care. “Go to General Sakharoff at once,” I instructed Martini, “and tell him that if the electrician is not liberated, no lights will be operated to-night in any of the Russian officers’ quarters, though the lines communicating with the servants’ and workmens’ quarters will be continued.” The man was set

free, and about half an hour afterwards General Sakharoff called, filled with cordiality; surely I had not misunderstood his little joke! This action did not deter him, however. Soon arrests became more common; women who had crossed the ice from Vladivostok were continually hanging about asking that their husbands, who were among our workmen, should be allowed free and not shot. Late one evening, a Russian Guards officer, whom we knew to be especially reactionary, called and asked that I should tell him the whereabouts of our head tin-smith, a Jew from Odessa, who had been with us from the beginning of our work and whom I knew to be politically reliable. I told him, but at the same time confess that I notified the man to get out. To my surprise he was still there in the morning. "I am absolutely innocent," he said. "Let them take me if they wish, as an ex-soldier I cannot run away."

Still relations between myself and the General remained entirely friendly. There was so much to like in him, in spite of his tendencies, which after all were but what one might expect from his training; he was so eminently capable, and in his way patriotic to his country.

By the end of January the work of reconstruction was complete, and General Blair, in General Knox's absence at Omsk, was thus able to give effect to his promise that we three Canadians might leave the school. This permission came as a great relief; the work had been strenuous and unceasing and we did not like the way affairs were trending.

We had a wonderful send-off. A grand ban-

quet was given by General Sakharoff in the Russian officers' mess, at which about 150 covers were laid. A massed band played "God Save the King," and the Canadian National Anthem, "O Canada." The former is familiar the world over, but that the latter should be played with remarkable success was surprising, and to us Canadians, most gratifying. Most festivities of this kind are assisted by alcoholic refreshment, and to anyone who has lived in Russia it will be clear that for the Russians, at any rate, a banquet without a great deal of it would be a howling failure. There was no need to complain of a lack of hospitality in this regard! After the speeches had been made, and after we three had all been draped in the flags of the school and carried aloft around the room, we began to think it was time to depart while some sensibility still remained. It was only then we realized, with what vestige of horror it was still possible to summon up in such a maudlin state, that a peculiarly Russian ceremony had to be carried out before we should be allowed to go. A tray appeared on which were three large glasses brimming with neat cherry brandy—one for each of us. Coming to each separately, the bearer requested us in turn to take a glass, while every one in the room, still able to do so, rose and sang a weird song, the words of which I can't recall, but through which ran the refrain "Drink it, drink it up quickly, drink it to the bottom."

After this excitement, my remembrance of what occurred is not altogether as clear as my pride would like it to be. I recall being photographed by flashlight, while being embraced by

numerous Russian officers, and being followed into the icy air outside by one particularly friendly colonel, who had been associated with us on Russian Island since the inception of the school. In the position of finding it impossible to disentangle myself from him, one of those flashes of inspiration that at times seem to help even the most drunken, came to me. I recalled this long association. "You have not kissed Stairs," I said. "Do so at once or he will feel unhappy." Fortunately for us, the route to our quarters was down-hill and gravity thus assisted us in getting rapidly to bed!

A few days afterwards we left the island, amid protestations of good-will on all sides. My place was taken by Lt. Col. Carter, a regular British officer, who had been with us on the island for a month or so, and who had had a distinguished career in France. Unfortunately for the school, Carter was not long to remain to direct affairs. Within a week or so he was seized with pneumonia and died soon afterwards. From that time the prosperity of the school seems to have languished. General Sakharoff, in the spring, was transferred to an important post in the anti-Bolshevik army operating in Western Siberia, and his place was taken by Colonel Pleshkoff, a son of General Pleshkoff. The school provided numerous officers and N.C.O.'s for Koltchak's armies, many of whom behaved with great gallantry during the disastrous military events of the following summer. But the dissatisfaction with the treatment received from their superior officer instructors, which had early shewn itself and which was at least in part to

be explained by that spirit of unrest pervading every Russian since the revolution, continued to grow. In the autumn, after all British soldiers had left, following the defeat of Koltchak's armies, agitation amongst the students culminated in a miniature revolt. The Russian Commandant and several of his staff were arrested by the students and ignominiously treated. Needless to say, this episode served to conclude the activities of an organization which had begun with such great promise. The Russians, at any rate, in their present state of evolution, are extremists, the pendulum swings rapidly from one point of view to another, the disciples of Czarism, are but little more liberal than those of Bolshevism; it was, perhaps, overly optimistic on our part to expect that we could reproduce the fraternal good-will, the fellowship of the Western armies, among a people to whom such ideas were entirely unfamiliar and foreign.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### CLOSE OF THE KOLTCHAK RÉGIME

The rise and fall of the Koltchak régime forms one of the most dramatic chapters in the sequence of events which closed the Great War. When the Social Revolutionary Government at Omsk, under the leadership of Avksentieff, was ousted from power by Koltchak in the autumn of 1918, whatever may have been thought of the methods pursued in the *coup d'état*, the consensus of moderate opinion was that the change was a good one. The country needed a strong man of unwavering purpose to control the warring political elements, to save the Siberia liberated by the Czechs from Bolshevism, to form a bulwark against the insidious propaganda so powerfully entrenched in old Russia, and, if possible, to re-establish constitutional conditions therein. Such a man seemed to have arisen in Koltchak. He was generally respected both by the army and navy, his record of public service was excellent, his integrity was unquestioned, he was not thought to be unduly biassed against radical opinions.

Koltchak's failure is due to many causes. He did not receive the whole-hearted support of the allied governments; they may have been well advised in not giving him recognition, but their action in this respect unquestionably hindered the progress of the movement he represented. Under these circumstances, it was remarkable there should have been so little friction among the representatives of the Allies and their small

military detachments in Siberia itself. Unfortunately for Koltchak, the methods by which he had arisen to power alienated moderate socialist opinion and necessitated his courting the support of elements known to be reactionary. Had he been strong enough to win the good-will of the non-Bolshevik socialists and not surrounded himself with officers and courtiers of the old régime he would have been able, perhaps, to have withstood the internal Bolshevik agitation, more dangerous than the wavering Bolshevik forces fighting against his armies. Instead, he failed absolutely to combat the intrigues and quarrels of the officers composing his entourage, who fought for first place in his counsels at Omsk, or in control of affairs at the front. His rule was doomed to failure almost at its inception. The moderate socialists instead of standing with him at first wavered and then sided with the Bolsheviks, more as a *modus operandi* than from any actual sympathy. Anything was better than a return of Czarism, which they read clearly in the tactics of Koltchak's followers. At the front there was little actual fighting; the opposing armies were generally miles apart, neither side wishing for battle; the Bolsheviks won more through propaganda than from any decision on the field.

I do not propose to dwell upon the tragic fate of Koltchak. The world in time will know the depressing and disheartening details, and, as in the case of the royal family, lament the distressing end of a great Russian, whose chief virtue was his patriotism. Suffice it to say, that surrendered at Irkutsk by those to whose protec-

tion he had given himself, for fear of their own personal safety, he was imprisoned by the rulers of the city. The latter, who were virtually Bolsheviks, had assumed control of Irkutsk during the struggle of the various parties for power following the evacuation of Western Siberia, by the Koltchak forces. Hearing that a strong detachment of the latter was approaching Irkutsk, and fearing that a sympathetic rising in favor of Koltchak would occur within the city, his trial took place immediately and he was condemned to be shot the following morning. When the firing party, composed of ex-soldiers, but commanded by a commissar, came to carry out the execution, they were so overcome by Koltchak's *sang-froid* that they refused to fire. Koltchak was smoking a cigarette and had offered one to each of the firing party, from his case. The commissar then declared that he would shoot Koltchak. The latter, at this intimation, turned to the soldiers and urged them to shoot him, adding that he preferred to be killed by those who had at least, formerly worn the Russian uniform with honor, than by a civilian, who could in no way have been considered an honorable citizen. The soldiers accordingly fired, but all shot into the air, with the exception of one whose rifle ball took effect in the legs. Koltchak fell and the commissar rushing forward, finished him with his pistol.

So many horrible events marked the close of the Koltchak régime that one hesitates to describe them in detail. The wholesale murders that were in places carried out are perhaps no more to be accredited to the actual leaders of

Bolshevism in Russia, than are the shameful deeds committed in Koltchak's time to be charged against the Admiral himself. All were symptomatic of the general condition of brutalization produced by the war, the wild delirium of the revolution, and the intense political antagonisms, which developed therefrom. Every foreigner in Siberia, during 1919, will recall the story of the train of death in which a large number of Bolshevik prisoners from the Western front were incarcerated. As the train moved eastward no one was allowed to leave; there was a hole in each car large enough to take in food or pitch out the dead, a pestilence broke out, and the imprisoned begged for death. On reaching Nikolsk-Ussuriski, near Vladivostok, the moving "Black Hole of Calcutta" was turned back westward and was kept on slowly moving, till death ended the hideous tortures of the unhappy victims.

Words absolutely fail to describe the horrors which took place in the isolated town of Nikolaefsk, near the mouth of the Amur River, from the time the wretched settlement fell into the hands of a large band of desperadoes, allegedly Bolsheviks, in February, 1920, till it was relieved by the Japanese at the beginning of June. There is no railway line north of Habarovsk, and communication with Nikolaefsk, is mainly by the Amur River, on which large and comfortable steamers ply in summer, and which is followed by the winter post road. Relays of horses in ordinary times take the traveller rapidly across the ice from village to village. During the brief summer, Russian, Japanese, and Chinese fishing boats make Nikolaefsk their headquarters for

the fishing season in the sea of Okhotsk, ice-bound for nearly eight months in the year. Nikolaefsk is also the centre of the alluvial gold industry of the Northern Amur.

Following the capture of Habarovsk and Nikolaefsk, by the Japanese and anti-Bolshevik Russians (the so-called White Guards), in the autumn of 1918, the worst of the Bolsheviks took refuge in the small settlements along the Amur where they were apparently on good terms with the peasant population. During the summer of 1919, augmented by Hunghez, and various recruits collected forcibly—the whole forming what were locally described as partisans—these terrorized the Amur, especially the mail boats ascending and descending the river.

Nikolaefsk was garrisoned by about 600 Japanese soldiers and perhaps as many Russians, at first nominally under the command of a Russian officer, but when serious trouble began, of a Japanese. There were, in addition, one or two small Chinese gunboats with their complement of Chinese bluejackets.

The attack on Nikolaefsk by the partisans, among whom were large numbers of peasants actuated by hatred of the Japanese rather than by any pro-Soviet feeling, began on January 20th, 1920, but the city did not fall into their hands till the end of February. The Russian section of the garrison, when the test came, seems to have shewn little spirit, the Japanese fought valiantly, but apparently on this occasion without their usual skill. At the time of the surrender, the White Guards actually met the partisans with a band and escorted them into the

city. The Japanese, needless to say, took no part in this disgraceful ceremony.

Following the surrender of Nikolaefsk to the Reds an orgy of executions without trial began, while every decent person in the city, with a population at that time of about 12,000, was arrested. The two prisons were jammed to overflowing. On the 11th of March, Japanese soldiers of the original garrison, following a request that they surrender their arms, during a parade in honor of the Bolshevik dead, attacked the Red headquarters. General fighting immediately broke out, the Japanese were defeated and the soldiers still alive, to the number of 134, surrendered. The events which followed exceed in horror the ideas of the most criminally imaginative. The prisons were emptied and in the intense cold of nearly fifty degrees of frost the unfortunate prisoners—men, women, and children—were marched, bare-footed and naked to the waist one mile along the frozen Amur, where they were butchered with bayonets, knives and rifle butts; not a single shot was fired to ease the agonies of the wretched victims. Meanwhile, every Japanese civilian, irrespective of age or sex, and they numbered many hundreds, was destroyed.

During the months which followed, a reign of terror set in in Nikolaefsk. Towards the end of May, word reached the city that a Japanese relief expedition was approaching. The Chinese officials, wishing to continue the neutrality which they had shown from the beginning, decided to withdraw their nationals from Nikolaefsk to a place of safety, a short distance north of the town. With their departure the last threads of

decency or semblance of control left to the Bolsheviks disappeared. The jail containing the Japanese soldier prisoners was set on fire, the Reds shooting or clubbing to death those who endeavored to escape from their agony. Meanwhile, a fresh campaign of slaughter of all Russians with a semblance of respectability, set in, and all who did not escape to the Chinese, were massacred.

Altogether in the terrible sequence of events in Nikolaefsk, upwards of 4,000 non-Bolshevik Russians were killed and 834 Japanese. The Reds lost about 500 and the Chinese from stray bullets, etc., about 100. One British subject, John Freed, a Canadian by birth, and manager of one of the largest fisheries on the Amur, was murdered on the charge of being a counter-revolutionist.\*

Incredible as the horrors of Nikolaefsk may be, it is painful to realize that the horrible story is true, and that events almost equally terrible took place at other localities, which were carried out, not by a non-Christian or even colored population, but by people apparently as white as the average American or Western European, and, if emotional display can have any connection with Christianity, as deeply religious.

To me the people of Nikolaefsk were strangers and, distressing as the news of the gruesome happenings were, I did not experience the same personal recoil as when I learned of events else-

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\*Most of the information as to the events in Nikolaefsk is obtained from the account submitted by Mr. George S. Dyer, General Manager of the Omsk Goldfields.

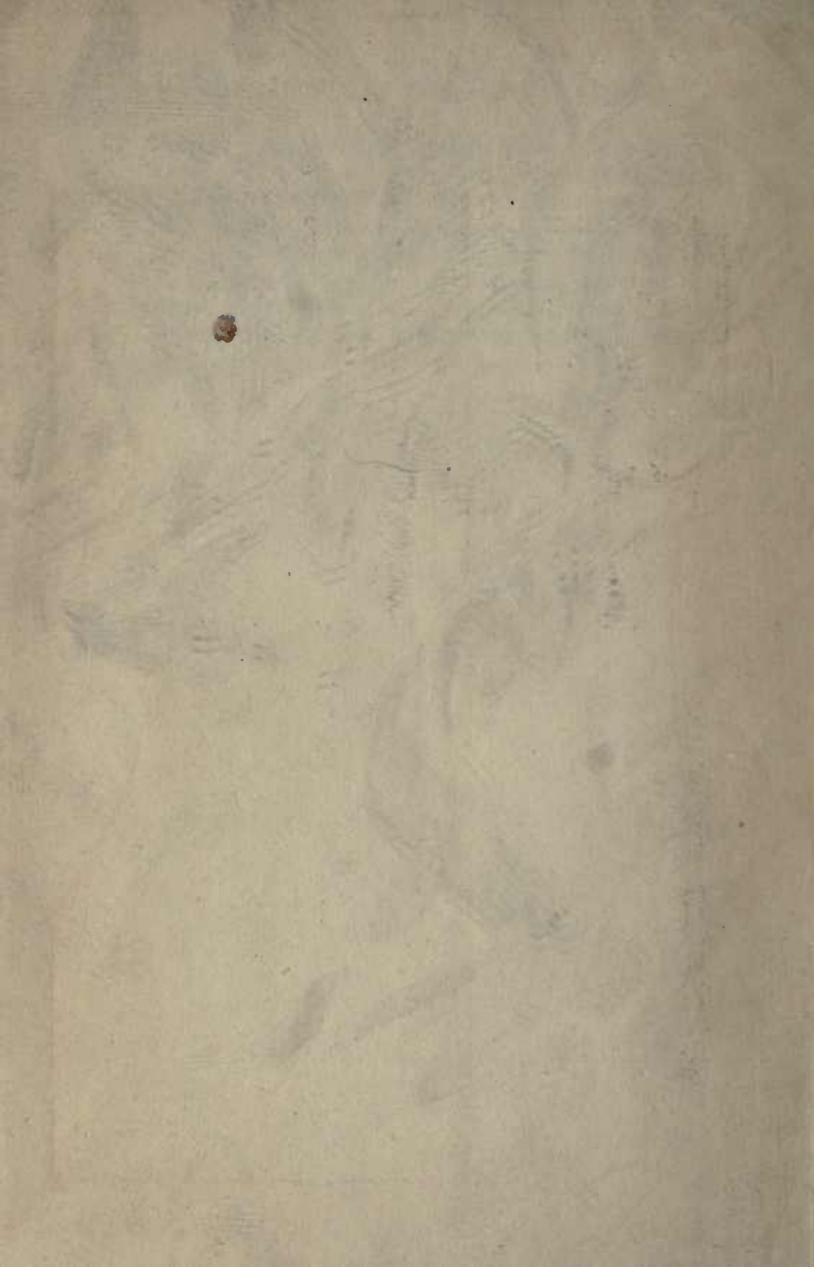
where. Among the lesser tragedies which happened at Habarovsk, following the capture of the city after the Koltchak collapse, one comes to my mind as I write: the murder of some fifty or more officers who were led out of the city on to a railroad bridge, across a large river. They were ordered to the centre, where the Bolsheviks enjoyed themselves shooting at the legs of their victims till one by one they fell off the narrow bridge into the river. Among those who thus perished was my dear friend, Captain Galyavin, a gallant Russian gentleman. *Requiescat in pace!*

It is difficult to say how Siberia is now governed. Little verifiable information emerges from the obscurity in which the country is now plunged. Vladivostok and the coastal towns are nominally ruled by local socialist organizations, whose political tenets at least approach Bolshevism, but order is maintained by the Japanese. A Government similar in political complexion to that of Vladivostok appears to function at Chita, with apparently a certain check on its activities from the Japanese. Western Siberia is in the hands of the Bolsheviks, though how much under the control of Moscow, is difficult to say.

Meanwhile, the culture of Siberia is practically dead, progress in business has ceased, there is almost no communication with the outside world, save from Vladivostok. The great mines and other industries owned by foreigners have been nationalized, which generally means closed and unproductive. Such a state of affairs in a vast section of the earth's surface—containing five million square miles—cannot indefinitely continue. Not even Canada possesses such un-

limited agricultural possibilities, such great areas of almost untouched forest-land, such widely varied and practically undeveloped mineral wealth. There is every range of climate from the almost unceasing heat of Southern Turkestan to the almost unending cold of the Arctic coast. What an Empire to develop! What an opportunity for a vigorous, energetic people to grasp!





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